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A STUDY OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND HOUSING CHOICES AMONG FIRST-YEAR
COLLEGE STUDENTS

By
DARRED KING WILLIAMS

A doctoral dissertation submitted to the
College of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Education
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May, 2020


A STUDY OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND HOUSING CHOICES AMONG FIRST-YEAR
COLLEGE STUDENTS

by


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DEDICATION

To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave me life and purpose in this world. To my parents, Michael and Dawn Williams, who sacrificed so much to adopt me, my brothers and sisters and continue to encourage, teach, and love us more and more every day. To my wife, Leah Breanne Means Williams, who continues to inspire me with her love and support. To my brothers and sisters, who continue to keep me humble and constantly remind me where I came from so that I never become conceited and arrogant. To the first person who believed I could accomplish this, invested in me more than I ever deserved, and addressed me as “Dr. Williams” well before I was deserving of a such a title, my brother and mentor, Dr. Allen Griffin.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to study how spiritual growth and housing choices for first-year college students correlate with one another. This qualitative case study is founded on the conceptual frameworks of Erikson's stages of psychosocial development and Fowler's stages of faith development. The research participants were a criterion-based sample consisting of six Christian college students entering their first semester of college who all attended the same Christian high school prior to beginning their college career. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants to gather rich, detailed information about their experiences in their spiritual and educational lives. Data collected from interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed to determine emergent themes. Findings from this study suggest that housing choices of college students can influence spiritual growth based off of each research participant's interview responses and observations made by the researcher.

Keywords: emerging adult, spiritual formation, spiritual growth

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I. INTRODUCTION

Graduating from high school, choosing where to attend college, or choosing whether or not to even attend college is a pivotal and life-changing moment for all emerging adults, and many choose to continue their education by attending college. This decision point in emerging adults' lives has a tremendous influence on the people they become. Intellectual and professional development is emphasized during this season of emerging adults' lives; however, emotional, mental, and spiritual transformations are often apparent as well. One could reasonably argue that emotional, mental, and spiritual development might be even more important than the cognitive and academic development emphasized at colleges and universities.

During the college experience, many young people are given the freedom and ability to fully explore their spirituality without certain social safeguards, such as parents or minor status (Setran & Kiesling, 2013). First-year college students are challenged to be responsible for themselves and their decisions. Some students choose to face these new challenges in the safety of familiar surroundings by staying close to or living at home; others seek out the adventure of a brand-new environment away from home. These two different housing choices can profoundly influence students' lives emotionally, socially, cognitively, and spiritually. This qualitative study will explore the relationships between the perceptions of spiritual growth and the housing choices of Christian emerging adults attending their first year of college.

Background

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

Psychosocial Development

Erikson's (1980) stage theory of human development (see Table 1) describes the development of individuals through eight specific stages that are influenced by a variety of factors, including social influences, environmental factors, and cultural contributions (Jones, Vaterlaus, Jackson, & Morrill, 2014).

Table 1

Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

Stage	Ages	Characteristics
Trust versus Mistrust	0 to 1 ½ years	Stability/Predictability
Autonomy versus Shame/Doubt	1 ½ to 3 years	Will/Increasing Independence
Initiative versus Guilt	3 to 5 years	Assertiveness/Exploration
Industry versus Inferiority	5 to 12 years	Competency
Identity versus Identity Diffusion	12 to 18 years	Self/Fidelity
Intimacy versus Isolation	18 to 40 years	Intimacy in Relationships
Generativity versus Stagnation	40 to 65 years	Family/Society Contributions
Integrity versus Despair	65+ years	Acceptance of One's Life

Source: Erikson, E. (1980). *Identity and the life cycle*.

Erikson's fifth stage, identity versus identity diffusion, ends at approximately the age of 18, the same age that emerging adults typically enter college or university. Erikson characterized the fifth stage as the period when the true identity of an individual is formed independently of

previous influences, such as parents, siblings, and teachers. Although crucial aspects of relationship building are formed during the first four stages, an individual begins his or her personal formation of self-worth and societal role in the fifth stage (Rosenthal, Gurney, & Moore, 1981).

During emerging adulthood, college-age students typically transition to the sixth stage of human development, known as intimacy versus isolation (Knight, 2017). During this stage, emerging adults typically search for mutual love and acceptance. A variety of factors can contribute to or hinder individuals' abilities to develop in this stage, including ways that they transition into the next phase of life. The college years are generally seen as a milestone in a young person's transition into adulthood; Erikson's developmental stages and transitions can be influenced by emerging adults' choices to live at home or to live on campus during the college years.

Erikson's fifth stage of development of identity also includes spiritual formation, which may be influenced by an emerging adult's distance from home to attend college (Rosenthal et al., 1981). Living at home or living on campus for college could influence the dynamics of friendships for emerging adults. According to Erikson, during the identity versus identity diffusion stage of psychosocial development, the primary relationships and communities of emerging adults have varying influences on identity formation, including ideologies such as religious beliefs and spirituality (Rosenthal et al., 1981).

Arnett (2000) proposed that individuals within this stage of life, which he refers to as identity versus identity Diffusion, could be identified as entering a new phase that he terms "emerging adulthood" (p. 469). In his article, Arnett proposed that emerging adulthood is a

recognizable stage of life that is set between adolescence and young adulthood. The author went on to state that emerging adulthood is more of a cultural construct than a universally established phase of life. This study is important to note because it suggests that there are cultural factors, such as surrounding environments, that can impact the development of individuals in this phase of life. Arnett discussed how Erikson's stages of development indirectly suggested that there is a phase of life in-between adolescence and young adulthood. Arnett described this phase as "a period that is in some ways adolescence and in some ways young adulthood yet not strictly either one, a period in which adult commitments and responsibilities are delayed while the role experimentation that began in adolescence continues and in fact intensifies" (p. 470).

Arnett (2000) even provided evidence that a major factor of the emerging adulthood demographic development is residential status. While comparing different types of living statuses for emerging adults, he went on to say that the only real unifying factor of their residency statuses is the overall instability for this specific demographic. This study showed how malleable this specific age group is and how residential status can influence almost every aspect of emerging adults experiencing Erikson's sixth stage of psychosocial development, Identity versus Isolation.

Faith Development

Although Erikson focused on psychosocial development, one must also consider that development of faith is also important to the proposed study. Fowler's (1981) six stages of faith development described different spiritual maturity levels during an individual's lifetime (see Table 2). Fowler's fourth stage is described as the individuative/reflective stage, which

recognizes emerging adulthood as the point at which individuals begin to critically examine and challenge their personal beliefs about their spirituality.

Table 2

Fowler's Stages of Faith Development

<u>Stage</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Characteristics of Faith</u>
Intuitive/Projective	2 to 7 years	Symbols/Good versus Evil
Mythic/Literal	7 to 12 years	Understanding Faith Community
Synthetic/Conventional	12 to 18 years	Identifying Shared Faith of Others
Individuative/Reflective	18 to Adult	Seeing Other Faiths/Beliefs
Conjunctive	Midlife	Seeing Paradoxes/Complexities
<u>Universalizing</u>	<u>Late Life</u>	<u>In the World/Not of the World</u>

Source: Fowler, J.W. (1981). *Stages of faith: The Psychology of Human Development and Quest for Meaning*.

This critical stage is characterized as one in which people are encouraged to explore their faith and spirituality, making sure that their faith is truly independent and not based solely on preconceived notions or the beliefs of others that have been assimilated (“James Fowler’s Stages of Faith,” n.d.). Among first-year college students, housing choices and the environments that they represent may influence the ways that students navigate this fourth stage of faith development. Although stage theorists such as Erikson (1980) and Fowler (1981) acknowledged the importance of emerging adults’ questioning their faith, students want a questing environment that provides them with resources and mentors to guide them without restraining their ability to think freely (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2010).

Researchers have investigated the influence of Christian environments at university (Otto & Harrington, 2016), parents' motives for college selection (Setran & Kiesling, 2013), and spiritual growth in Christian higher education (Astin et al., 2010). However, these studies do not directly focus on the relationships between college students' residency decisions and spiritual growth development.

Residency Choices

Turley (2006) acknowledged that parents' strategies for encouraging their child's decisions were important factors that contributed to students' college choices and destinations. Turley described parents as the ones who generally initiated the discussion about college and provided information regarding college choice. Using data from the *National Educational Longitudinal Study* from 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, and 2000, Turley analyzed 17,153 surveys of eighth – through twelfth–grade students to determine whether or not the students applied for college during their senior year of high school. Turley also conducted a survey of students' parents to uncover the strategies parents employed to prepare their children to apply for college. According to Turley, parents' reasons for motivating their emerging adults to stay close to home for college included financial concerns, prevention of homesickness, and close familial relationships.

Turley (2006) also found that parents had anticipated negative outcomes associated with students living at home during college, including strained familial relationships, challenges adjusting to adulthood psychologically, and low educational aspirations. The results of the study were straightforward: "High school seniors with college-at-home parents are less likely to apply to college than seniors with college-anywhere parents" (p. 83). However, Turley's (2006) study

did not discuss spiritual formation as a contributing factor to parents' reasons for encouraging their children to stay home or to leave home for college.

Nelson, Misra, Syte, and Mackie (2016) studied the relationships between distance from campus and the overall grade point average (GPA) of university commuter students. The researchers collected 403 student records from Saginaw Valley State University to analyze the relationships between commuters' distance from campus and GPA. Their research revealed that commuters' distance from campus was significantly and inversely correlated to Overall GPA ($p = .01$); the greater the distance from campus, the lower the GPA. Commuter students who lived a moderate distance from the university tended to have lower cumulative GPAs, although the two variables were not significantly related, like they were for students who lived a greater distance from the campus. This study revealed that residential choices and distance from campus were related to measurable academic achievement at university. However, the study did not examine other aspects of college life, including spiritual growth. In addition, the study did not focus exclusively on first-year commuter students.

Frazier and Eighmy (2012) conducted a mixed methods study to investigate the relationships between themed residential communities and students' overall satisfaction at university. Themed residential communities are residence halls in which individuals are grouped together based on a specific, common theme. The study focused on 255 subjects who were spread across three different themed residential learning communities and non-themed residence halls at North Dakota State University (NDSU). Two of the themed residential communities were themed according to academic major (pharmacy and engineering/architecture majors) and the third community was a wellness-themed community. The researchers used a mixed methods research design to conduct interviews with students, faculty, and staff in order to develop survey

items to measure students' satisfaction regarding their residential life. The resulting survey measured student satisfaction with their housing and included 255 respondents from the entire NDSU population; 108 were members of one of the three learning communities (39 in pharmacy, 36 in engineering/architecture, and 33 in wellness). The control group in this study included students who were not a part of any of the themed learning communities. In the interviews, the researchers found that students' perceived satisfaction was positively related to their interactions with the learning community and with the faculty; the more interactions students had with faculty, the greater their perceived satisfaction, and vice versa.

While the results of the survey were somewhat mixed, significant differences between the themed community respondents and the control group respondents were uncovered. The students in the pharmacy-themed community reported greater satisfaction with housing facilities compared to the control group ($n = 36$; $p = .002$). Students housed in the wellness-themed community reported greater satisfaction with academic advising compared to the control group ($n = 39$; $p = .05$). Students in the engineering-themed community reported greater satisfaction with positive living experiences compared to the control group ($n = 33$; $p = .005$). This study indicated significant differences between student satisfaction and interactions and residency situations but did not focus specifically on the influence residency has on the spiritual growth of students.

Studies have shown that there are a variety of factors that can influence the overall development, including the spiritual development, of students at university (Astin et al., 2010; Henderson, 2003; Hindman, 2002; Moore, 2003; Otto & Harrington, 2016; Turley, 2006; Wallace, 2017). These factors include parental influences, interactions with peers and faculty, and residency status. However, these studies have not focused on the spiritual development of

college students who were living at home and students who moved away from home to attend college. The dearth of research on the residency choices of emerging adults who attend a university creates an opportunity to explore any relationships between residency choices and spiritual growth that may exist.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of Christian emerging adults who are first-year college students' residency decisions (living at home or living on campus) on their spiritual growth during their first year in college. This case study was a non-experimental, qualitative study based on interviews of Christian emerging adults who chose to live at home or to live on campus during their first year of college.

Methodology

Research Questions

This qualitative study addressed the following research questions and sub-questions:

1. What are the perceptions of first-year Christian emerging adults' spiritual growth since their arrival at university?
 - How do Christian emerging adults who are first-year college students' experiences at university influence their spiritual growth?
2. How do the residency choices of Christian emerging adults who are first-year college students influence their spiritual growth during the first year of college or university?

Research Design

After approval by the Southeastern University Institutional Review Board, the researcher disseminated an online survey designed to assist in the sample selection (see Appendix A). In phase one of the study, the online survey was sent to Trinity Christian Academy and distributed to the recently graduated senior class during the summer after their graduation to draw a sample of convenience of six voluntary research participants who were about to start their first year of college. Participants were required to meet the following criteria established by the researcher:

- They must identify as first-year college students.
- They must be between the ages of 18 and 21.
- They will be enrolled in college as full-time students.
- They are professing Christians.
- They come from a Christian home (a home where at least one parent identifies as Christian).

Six research participants were purposively selected from among the respondents who completed the survey based on adherence to the study's criteria for participation. The selected respondents were split between three individuals who planned on staying home for their first year of college and three individuals who planned on moving away for their first year of college. Interviews consisted of the following questions:

1. "Spiritual formation is an intentional, multifaceted process which promotes transformation by which Christ is formed in us, so that we can become His continually maturing disciples" (Dettoni, 1994, p. 16). How would you describe your spiritual formation at this moment in your life?
2. On a scale of 1 – 10, how would you rate your current level of faith?

3. How do you remain composed or collect yourself during stressful times or in difficult situations?
4. On a scale of 1 – 10, how would you rate your ability to deal with difficult circumstances in your life?
5. How do you personally engage social injustice or help people in your life when they experience stress, pain, or suffering?
6. On a scale of 1 – 10, how would you rate yourself on how much you help reduce pain and suffering in the world?
7. What types of community service and volunteer work are you currently involved in?
8. On a scale of 1 – 10, how important would you rank it is to do volunteer work?
9. How do you view and interact with other people who have different religious beliefs and cultures?
10. On a scale of 1 – 10, how would you rank your acceptance of people who have different beliefs than you?
11. How do you currently search for meaning and purpose in your life?
12. On a scale of 1 – 10, how important is it for you to search for meaning and purpose in life?
13. Is there anything else you would like to share about your transition from high school to college regarding either your residency choice or spiritual growth? (only in post-semester interview)

After the six research participants had completed their first semester of college, they were contacted again to conduct a follow-up interview. The second interview consisted of the same questions.

The volunteer research participants received a copy of the informed consent form and gave verbal and written assent to the researcher to conduct the interviews. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in a neutral setting mutually agreed upon between both the participant and the researcher. Interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Participants' personal identifying information was assigned a code and pseudonym to ensure anonymity. All of the researcher's notes, interview recordings, transcriptions, and data were kept on the researcher's password-protected laptop to which only the researcher had access.

The transcripts of both interviews were presented to the corresponding interviewee to validate their recollection of the interview process. The researcher then analyzed the interview data to identify recurring themes within each interview, to determine relationships between and among subjects, and to create accurate profiles of each of the participants. The researcher then made comparisons between the initial interviews before the participants started college and the secondary interviews after the participants completed their first semester of college, recognizing themes and changes that occurred in each participants' responses. Significant statements and differences noticed were highlighted and extracted by the researcher. The themes noticed from the responses and differences of responses from the pre-college experience and post-college experience interviews were categorized, and the researcher addressed the research questions by reporting the results of the compiled group themes. From there, conclusions were derived from the research.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

The first assumption in this study was that all research participants were volunteers, genuinely interested in the study, and understood that the results of this study were important to furthering the body of knowledge to help emerging adults better understand how their residency choices for their first year of college can impact their spiritual growth. As a result, one can assume that research participants were honest in their responses. Furthermore, the researcher assumed that the criteria for inclusion in this study was appropriate for the purposes of the research. The researcher also assumed that all research participants had no ulterior motives and had nothing to gain personally or professionally from their participation in this study.

Limitations

Certain parameters were enforced throughout the study to control certain variables and to ensure research integrity. The researcher limited the age of the first-year college students to be interviewed to 18–21 to ensure alignment with the stage of life identified by Erikson's and Fowler's stages of development (Fowler, 1981; Rosenthal et al., 1981). Also, participants had to have been in the first year of their college experience.

Other variables could not be controlled in the study. One such variable is denominational affiliation and teaching; an attempt to select subjects from one specific denomination could have skewed results or narrowed the scope of the study. The researcher also did not control for the participants' level of involvement in extracurricular activities while in college, which could have an impact on a participant's spiritual growth during the study. If an individual was heavily

involved in school programs or clubs while in college, his or her spiritual growth could be influenced by time constraints or other variables. Employed students also face the same problem of time constraints. Finally, the study did not take into consideration the socioeconomic status of participants.

Delimitations

The role of the researcher was to interview first-year college students who graduated from a Christian private school and were enrolled full time. This specific sample was selected because the researcher could see changes between when the participants graduated high school and after their first semester of college. This study focused on the research participants' perceived spiritual growth and their residency status in college; if the participants did not emphasize spiritual growth in their lives, their responses to the fundamental research question would have had no practical value for the expressed purpose of this study.

In this study, the researcher selected participants who met the criteria in terms of age, college residency status, and spiritual emphasis as Christians. Since this study focused on perceived spiritual growth of Christian college students, the researcher chose to select participants from a Christian academy. The choice to focus on first-year college students was made because this timeframe is the area of most change in environment and experience for college students during their college career.

Finally, the researcher chose a non-experimental qualitative research design for this study to emphasize the importance of hearing research participants' stories and to provide an in-depth analysis of their experiences.

Definition of Terms

This study uses the term *emerging adults* to describe the population being studied. The term *emerging adults* was originally established by Arnett (2000) to give better clarification of the phase of life between adolescence and young adulthood.

Emerging adulthood has become a distinct period of the life course for young people in industrialized societies. It is a period characterized by change and exploration for most people, as they examine the life possibilities open to them and gradually arrive at more enduring choices in love, work, and worldviews (Arnett, 2000, p. 479)

This study also utilizes a working definition of *spiritual growth* as described in the Astin et al.'s (2010) study to include students' perceptions of both: (a) religiosity (defined as spiritual practices such as church attendance, scripture reading, prayer, acts of service, and worship) as measured by the initial survey used for interviewee selection (Appendix A); and (b) spirituality, defined as the inner, subjective life characterized by compassion, love, and equanimity (Astin et al., 2010).

Dettoni's (1994) definition of *spiritual formation* was used in the interview: "Spiritual formation is an intentional, multifaceted process which promotes transformation by which Christ is formed in us so that we can become His continually maturing disciples" (p. 16).

Significance of the Study

This study can lead to greater understanding of how the residency status of college students and spiritual growth relate with one another. The research on the relationships between

these two variables is sparse. However, a great deal of research exists related to the responsibilities of Christian higher education institutions to promote students' spiritual growth (Astin et al., 2010; Setran & Kiesling, 2013); parents' purposes for wanting their children to stay close to home during the college years (Turley, 2006); and Christian education versus public education (LeBlanc & Slaughter, 2009; Otto & Harrington, 2016). The purposed qualitative study will explore Christian emerging adults during their first semester of college and analyze their perceptions of spiritual growth and its relationship with residency choices.

Given the dearth of research related to residency choices of first-year college students and their relationships to spiritual growth, this study will add to the body of knowledge and literature on spiritual growth. The study will also lead to a greater understanding of the spiritual growth of first-year college students and specifically focus on whether residency choices have any influence on spiritual growth. Recommendations for future research derived from this study may lead to better planning and resources for universities and religious organizations designed to help students during this critical juncture in their social, emotional, and spiritual development. In addition, the results may point to innovative ideas that promote greater access to educational and spiritual development opportunities for students regardless of residency status. The results could also help student affairs professionals to understand how students with different residency statuses are influenced spiritually and allow them to create unique services to help each community attending their college. The results could provide insight to parents to help them better prepare college students and make more informed decisions regarding residency status and spiritual growth. In this way, the results may influence and cultivate spiritual growth for generations of college students to come.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Emerging adults' religious views and factors influencing those views have been a subject of interest for researchers for some time (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). At the same time, there have been studies that also focus on how communities and environments in college relate to the development of students throughout their college career (Frazier & Eighmy, 2012). Yet, the relationship between religious and spiritual growth along with the communities established based on housing choices has rarely been connected (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Both of the categories of psychosocial stages and faith stages are viewed as significant areas of development crucial to healthy growth in the college-age phase of life (Erikson, 1980; Fowler, 1981) and the consideration of an emerging adult's social development based on residency status can influence an emerging adult's faith development and spiritual growth.

Existing research supported the idea that college environments have a tremendous effect on the character development of an emerging adult (Kuh, 2000). Spirituality transitions in the emerging adults' phase of life from the certainty and absolutes of adolescence into the complex and abstract understanding of the world around them in adulthood (Love, 2001). The study of college environments has been the subject of research for decades, along with studies regarding the spiritual and faith development of emerging adults in college; however, the relationship between the environments and faith development has not been specifically addressed in many of these studies (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

The research reviewed in this literature review was selected to cover the following areas:

1. Psychosocial development, specifically research regarding Erickson's (1980) fifth stage of psychosocial development, intimacy vs. isolation, as this stage is most commonly associated with emerging adults.
2. Fowler's (1981) stages of faith development, specifically the individuative/reflective stage of development, as it usually begins concurrently with emerging adulthood.
3. Spiritual development research that addresses emerging adults in college.
4. Relationships and influences of residency status and other variables

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of Christians who are first-year college students' residency decisions (living at home or living on campus) and their spiritual growth during their first year of college.

Psychosocial Development

Erik Erikson (1980) posited in his book, *Identity and the Life Cycle*, that there are eight stages of social development every individual goes through in a lifetime. While the age at which each stage occurs for each individual varies, there is a general outline of when a healthy individual would encounter each of these stages (Knight, 2017; see table 3). The phase of life that most emerging adults attending college face is the intimacy vs. isolation phase of development, when individuals balance the desire and uncertainty of intimacy with others with the safety and security of isolation within themselves (Knight, 2017). Knight proposed that Erikson's (1981) psychosocial development could also provide a model of psychodynamic psychotherapy to help treat clients in therapy dealing with various traumatic experiences in life. The idea of Erikson's model being a support for psychotherapy and identity discovery shows

how important his model is to study of social development and self-identification as a whole and provided a foundation for the expected psychosocial development stage of emerging adults.

Table 3

The proposed eight-stage model of psychodynamic psychotherapy linked to Erik Erikson's (1980) eight stages of psychosocial development

Stages	Erikson's eight stages of Psychosocial Development	The eight-stage model of Psychodynamic Psychotherapy
Infancy	Basic Trust vs Mistrust The virtue of Hope	The Search for Courage: Balancing the poles of Basic Trust vs Mistrust
Early Childhood	Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt The virtue of Will	The Search for Knowing When: Balancing the poles of Letting Go vs Holding On
Play age	Initiative vs Guilt The virtue of Purpose	The Search for Tenacity: Balancing the poles of Moving Onwards vs Guilt
School age	Industry vs Inferiority The virtue of Competence	The Search for Efficacy: Balancing the poles of Productivity vs Inadequacy
Adolescence	Identity cohesion vs Role confusion The virtue of Fidelity	The Search for Belonging: Balancing the poles of

Young adulthood	Intimacy vs Isolation The virtue of Love	Duplicity vs Faithfulness The Search for Mutual Loving: Balancing the poles of Connectivity vs Segregation
Adulthood	Generativity vs Stagnation/ self-absorption The virtue of care	The Search for Needed-ness: Balancing the poles of Being Relevant vs Inertia
Old age	Integrity vs Despair The Virtue of Wisdom	The Search for Inner Peace: Balancing the poles between Contentment and Regret

Note. Reprinted from Knight, Z. G. (2017). A proposed model of psychodynamic psychotherapy linked to Erik Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 24(5), 1047–1058. doi: 10.1002/cpp.2066

Arnett (2000) suggested there is another phase of life between adolescence and young adult, which he entitled “emerging adulthood.” He stated that emerging adulthood is only present in societies that allow individuals to postpone their transition into full adult roles and responsibilities past their adolescence. Arnett conducted a review of literature to form a theoretical background and provide evidence of the distinct period of emerging adulthood. He used Erikson's (1980) classification of “prolonged adolescence” (p. 470) as an undistinguished classification of the emerging adulthood development stage. One of the variables that Arnett (2000) specified as inconsistent during emerging adulthood is residency status.

Arnett (2000) also identified higher education as another characteristic that could prolong the life phase of emerging adults, as they would have more continued freedom for self–

exploration. The researcher stated that the most important characteristics to emerging adults was not demographic transitions, such as marital status or career choice, but personal character traits. The top two criteria of emerging adulthood identified by Arnett were accepting personal responsibility and independent actions (p. 472–473). The emphasis on autonomy aligns emerging adulthood with the identification of the isolation pole of Erikson's (1980) fifth stage of psychosocial development, intimacy vs. isolation. Arnett (2000) continued by connecting emerging adulthood with the other pole of this stage of social development, intimacy. Arnett mentioned that emerging adults view dating with more emphasis on the emotional and physical intimacy aspects, compared to the more casual and recreational view of dating generally held adolescents (p. 473).

Arnett (2000) connected emerging adulthood not only to psychosocial development, but also to religious development as well. The researcher addressed research that suggested that emerging adults will reevaluate their personal religious beliefs during this phase of life, regardless of their educational background, to form their own set of beliefs, independent of the inherent beliefs established and instilled to them by family members. Arnett's concept of emerging adulthood gives a specified term to the young adults during the transformative fifth stage of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1980). The concept also ties together various aspects of an individual that are challenged during this phase of life, including independence, intimacy, religious beliefs, and plans for the future. Emerging adulthood encompasses the exploration of intimacy vs. isolation and explains how time attending a university or college can influence this phase of life.

Sokol (2009) conducted a review of research to examine Erikson's (1981) model from an entire life-span perspective. He included evidence from empirical studies to support the findings that he made during his review. Sokol posited that each of Erikson's (1981) psychosocial development stages were associated with an inherent challenge that all individuals must face and successfully resolve before proceeding with their personal development. The overall goal or conflict that individuals are attempting to resolve is connecting the idea of individuals' personal sense of worth along with a sense of purpose in the world. At the end of his review, Sokol (2009) stated that while studies show that adolescence is the "optimal time for identity development due to a variety of physical, cognitive, and social factors" (p. 7), there is evidence that supports the idea that identity development does continue to occur into adulthood, although there is not as much detail as to what that transition looks like in the older phases of life. This review reinforces the idea that emerging adulthood is an important phase of psychosocial development as identity creation becomes more difficult and stagnation becomes more likely to occur as an individual gets older and settles into adulthood (Sokol, 2009). Yet, as important as emerging adulthood is, it can be overlooked and blurred into either adolescence or adulthood without understanding the important distinction of the emerging adult phase of life.

Jones, Vaterlaus, Jackson, and Morrill (2014) conducted a quantitative cross-sectional research study to examine how friendship characteristics, identity formation, and psychosocial development interact and inform one another in emerging adults. Jones et al. had 702 emerging adults, ranging in ages from 18 – 23, attending Utah State University complete a Likert scale questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of questions regarding all three categories being examined by the researchers (friendship characteristics, identity formation, and psychosocial development). The purpose of the Jones et al. study was to determine just how dependent

identity development, as recognized by Erikson (1980), is on socialization and friendships with peers. The study distinguished friendships, as defined by Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, are related to gender ($\beta = .52, p < .05$), conflict within friendships ($\beta = -.17, p < .01$), and support within friendships ($\beta = .12, p < .01$) (p. 59).

Jones et al. (2014) also studied the relationship between friendship characteristics and identity development by recognizing four areas of identity development: trust ($\beta = -.01, p < .01$), autonomy ($\beta = .16, p < .01$), initiative ($\beta = .15, p < .05$), and industry ($\beta = .12, p < .05$); and measuring students confidence in them alongside the friendship characteristics (p. 61). The evidence of the Jones et al. study suggested that friendship characteristics are related to Erikson's (1980) early stages of psychosocial development and that the first four stages of Erikson's theory are related to the fifth stage – intimacy vs. isolation. The researchers also studied the relationships among all of these categories and the psychosocial development categories of achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion. This study was designed to test Erikson's idea that family members provided the primary driving force of psychosocial development and the results of the study suggest that extrafamilial relationships may have more influence than originally hypothesized by Erikson.

The results of the study demonstrated that almost every area of identity formation and psychosocial development had some form of correlation with the friendship characteristics. For example, conflict within friendships was negatively related to trust, autonomy, and initiative scores. While support within friendships was positively related to industry and initiative. Jones et al. (2014) suggested their study should lead to further research regarding identity formation and the relationship between variations of friendship influences and different ways of

socialization outside of adolescents' and emerging adults' immediate families. When individuals decide to go to college, the familial relationships become less of a priority and friendship relationships become more of a priority. The increased importance of friendships is true to varying degrees. For example, if an individual stays home for college, his or her familial relationships can still be significant, but an individual who moves away for college, his or her friendships in college begin to supersede, through daily interactions, the significance of familial relationships. If strong friendship relationships help emerging adults in the intimacy vs. isolation stage of Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, then individuals who are dependent solely on familial relationships during this phase could be hindered in their personal identity development. This study supports the idea that psychosocial development could be influenced by the residency status of college students. As students move on to college the decision between the most influential relationships during that time could be decided by the chosen residency status, with individuals who choose to stay home depending more on familial relationships that are designed to become less foundational as individuals shift into emerging adulthood.

Contrarily, Ickes, Park, and Johnson (2012) conducted a study to discover how an individual's sense of self correlates with perceived identity and was not focused on any external relationships. In the study, Ickes et al. used scores from the Sense of Self Scale (SOSS), the Self-Concept Clarity Scale (SCCS), the Self-Monitoring Scale (SMS), and the Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status 2 (EOM-EIS II) to determine if identity statuses were associated with sense of self (p. 531). The study focused on 288 undergraduates at the University of Texas in Arlington and had them complete online surveys measuring all of the scales mentioned. The Sense of Self Scale measured participants' strength versus weakness of their personal sense of self. The SCCS measured the clearness of one's self idea. The Self-

Monitoring Scale (SMS) measured the participants' abilities to adjust their identity based on different social situations. The EOM–EIS II measured the commitment levels of individuals for their chosen goals or personal aspirations.

Ickes et al. (2012) had the participants complete all four surveys and used multiple regression models to analyze the data. The researchers discovered that sense of self positively correlated with commitment to personal aspirations ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < .01$), but negatively correlated with “less stable” (p. 534) identity statuses, such as diffused ($\beta = -0.27$, $p < .01$), foreclosed ($\beta = -0.24$, $p < .05$) and moratorium ($\beta = -0.22$, $p < .05$) subscales. Overall, the study concluded that individuals who had a strong sense of self were more likely to achieve the goals that they set for themselves. Ickes et al. stated that it would be interesting to study how weak versus strong sense of self affects identity development over time. There are a variety of factors that influence sense of self and personal identity, but these two factors do seem to positively correlate with one another according to this study. As individuals transition from adolescence into emerging adulthood, they are searching for their personal identity and in order to be most successful they need a strong sense of self and not an overreliance on external sources to effectively go through Erikson's (1980) fifth stage of psychosocial development in a timely and productive fashion.

Spiritual growth and Development

Fowler (1981) presented the theory of the six stages of faith in his book, *Stages of Faith*. Each stage is distinguished by a specific age period for individuals. Stage one is called intuitive/projective faith, which occurs during early childhood and is when an individual's perceptions are taken as an absolute phenomenon because they are the only experiences that individual has to learn from (p. 123). Stage two is defined as the mythic/literal faith, when

young children begin to distinguish between fact and fantasized information, differentiating faith from figments of imagination to be solely based on factual story, information, and experiences (p. 136). Stage three marks the beginning of synthetic/conventional faith, when children shift towards adolescence and puberty. In the synthetic/conventional faith stage, formation of belief begins to be influenced by sources beyond immediate family as new spheres of influence begin to manifest in an adolescent's life (p. 172). Stage 4 is individuative/reflective faith, when young adults, or according to some sources, "emerging adults" (Setran & Kiesling, 2013) begin to take personal responsibility for their beliefs, learning how to balance between individual beliefs and societal pressure and external interactions (Fowler, 1981, p. 182). Stage 5 moves individuals towards conjunctive faith, when mature adults begin to concede the limitations of their own experiences and beliefs when it comes to faith and they learn to evaluate their "social unconscious" (p. 197–198). The last stage of faith that Fowler introduced is universalizing faith, when older adults find a sense of freedom from "the social, political, economic, and ideological shackles we place and endure on human futurity" (p. 201). Fowler stated that universalizing faith is the rarest of the six phases for individuals to reach, due to the difficulty of being truly released from the identified restraints. For the use of Fowler's stages of faith in this study, stage 4, individuative/reflective, is the most significant as it addresses the population to be studied (emerging adults) and the phase that emerging adults are most likely to experience.

Parker (2009) presented the idea that Fowler's (1981) theory of faith development could be used for counseling, specifically supervisors overseeing counselors, when counselors and clients reach an impasse in the therapeutic process because of differing religious and spiritual views. Parker's (2009) article reviewed research regarding spirituality in counseling, along with presenting fictitious scenarios of clients based on real-world situations and then presenting

possible responses of counselors. Parker also outlined seven personal structures used to determine the various stages of faith: 1) how logic is formed, 2) how moral reasoning is formed, 3) how perspective is taken, 4) how sense of the world is formed, 5) locus of authority, 6) bounds of social awareness, and 7) the role of symbolic function (p. 41). All of these structures work together to determine which stage of faith an individual is currently experiencing.

Throughout the article, Parker uses Fowler's (1981) faith development theory (FDT) to propose appropriate action steps for supervisors to take to ensure that the counselors can still serve and meet the needs of the client, regardless of their personal level of faith. Parker (2009) concluded the article by suggesting that further research should be done on how FDT works with various other supervisory roles, such as teachers (p. 50). On a college campus, there are individuals who are all on different stages of faith and this article emphasized the importance of recognizing those stages of faith and learning how to address different individuals on different stages who interact with one another, such as a teacher–student relationship, so their relationship can continue to be mutually beneficial.

However, stage 4, individuative/reflective faith, is the stage that is most closely associated with individuals starting college, as the vast majority of university students are emerging adults. Setran and Kiesling (2013) focused specifically on this stage of faith for Christians in their book, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A practical theology for college and young adult ministry*. Setran and Kiesling conducted a review of literature along with provided real–life examples from their professional experiences as college professors to provide a “practical theology” for college and emerging adult ministry (p. 7). The authors focused on the key developmental areas of faith, spiritual formation, identity, church, vocation, morality, sexuality, relationships, and mentoring.

Regarding faith, Setran and Kiesling (2013) addressed the fact that the emerging adulthood stage of life is usually accompanied with a “religious slump” (p. 12). The authors cited studies that showed a decline in religious practices, such as church attendance, daily prayer, Bible reading, and personal evangelism. Even with a decline in religious practices, evidence is also presented that suggested an increased interest in spiritual awareness. Setran and Kiesling stated the reasons for declining religious practices come from the new responsibilities and opportunities that an emerging adult has afforded to them, while concurrently the new experiences that are a direct result of these new opportunities lead to a greater interest in spiritual awareness. When reviewing spiritual formation, Setran and Kiesling made a distinction between cognitive-behavioral spirituality and spiritual renewal. Rather than focusing on just avoiding sin and sin behavior, the authors purposed a focus on addressing the root and heart issues that lead an individual to sin. Setran and Kiesling also mentioned that in some cases, emerging adults attending college may choose to stay at home or close to home and continue ascribing to established religious practices but warned these compliant actions of emerging adults does not necessarily ensure positive spiritual formation (p. 33).

Setran and Kiesling (2013) recognized identity development as somewhat difficult for emerging adults, stating that identity individualization usually results in two responses: apathy or anxiety (p. 59). Identity prior to the emerging adulthood phase of life is primarily “borrowed” beliefs from previous authority figures and external influences. The authors recommended addressing barriers which can hinder internal individualized identity for emerging adults and working through the new sociocultural systems and deciding what new perspective shifts align with a desired Christ-centered identity. Church is viewed as less of a requirement for emerging adults, even as Christian beliefs are still professed by emerging adults (p. 84). Setran and

Kiesling focused on the importance of fellowship, worship, and outreach and how the church is the primary provider for Christians to fulfill their need for these spiritual practices.

Setran and Kiesling (2013) included vocation in the list of key spiritual developmental areas. The authors stated that too often emerging adults who are professing Christians compartmentalize their vocation from their spiritual lives. The suggestion made by Setran and Kiesling is to introduce a comprehensive understanding of spiritual formation and societal responsibilities, instead of a constricting mindset, which promotes separating different aspects of life, such as professional, spiritual, and personal components. When covering morality, Setran and Kiesling warned against moral relativism, which has become a prominent belief in society today (p. 141). Instead, Setran and Kiesling listed five resources that could help with emerging adults' moral formation: stories, exemplars, practices, communities, and conscience catalysts. The authors recommended emphasizing God as the moral authority and using these resources to reinforce the belief of moral authority as opposed to moral individualism. Setran and Kiesling mentioned the concept of "serial monogamy" in regard to the key developmental area of sexuality. Basically, emerging adults have pursued a series of love relationships, even adopting a "hookup" culture in various forms (p. 164). To combat the new social norm of "serial monogamy," Setran and Kiesling discussed biblical ideologies regarding appropriate sexual behavior and endorsed using these ideologies to encourage a positive mentality of sexual value and purity, as opposed to imposing rules and restrictions.

Setran and Kiesling (2013) reviewed relationship practices of emerging adults and cautioned about the danger of attachment and how unhealthy attachments can lead to difficulty in relationship formation (p. 188). The authors intersected the concepts of sexuality and relationships, addressing how relationships should emphasize deepening trust, compatibility in

personal beliefs, and having a shared vision over physical attraction or sexual intimacy. Setran and Kiesling covered the key developmental component of mentoring last. The authors identified new areas of stress for emerging adults, specifically college students, leading them to desiring mentors to help college students navigate the newfound responsibilities than can overwhelm them (p. 206). The challenge in establishing mentor relationships comes from the fact that emerging adults primarily emphasize peer relationships and relationships with older adults are less frequent and available, especially if the emerging adults are college students attending a university away from home. Setran and Kiesling distinguished three themes when emerging adults are seeking mentoring relationships, which are to find relationships that help them to remember the past, be attentive to the present, and envision a future (p. 229). The authors compelled emerging adults to pursue intentional mentoring relationships as there is a lack of adequate mentors during this phase of life, especially in environments such as a college campus. Setran and Kiesling highlighted the significance of spiritual formation and assessed key developmental aspects of spiritual formation during emerging adulthood, including college students. Emerging adulthood is recognized as the phase of life where individuals shift to the individuating/reflective stage of faith. The individuating/reflective stage of faith (Fowler, 1981) that occurs in emerging adulthood is very important as it is a transition from established adoptive beliefs to independent faith development.

Spirituality and Religiosity of Emerging Adults in College

Many researchers who have conducted studies focused on spiritual growth admitted that emerging adulthood is a crucial phase of life in regard to spiritual growth and development (Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, 2011; Hartley, 2004; Moore, 2014; Turley, 2006; Wallace, 2017). There are also studies which focused on the idea that resources provided by colleges and

universities and college environments can help influence the spiritual development of college students (Holmes, Roedder, and Flowers, 2004; Lovik, 2011; Riggers–Piehl and Sax, 2018). While spirituality and religiosity may sometimes be interchangeable in casual circles, there is a distinction between the spiritual and religious qualities (Astin et al., 2011). In Astin et al.’s book, *Cultivating the Spirit: How college can enhance students’ inner lives*, the authors recognized religious qualities as practices that demonstrate religious faith, such as attending services, daily prayer, and devotions. Astin et al. identified spirituality as more abstract and personal for individuals, harder to identify by specific practices, but able to be recognized by the individuals experiencing spirituality for themselves. Even though religiosity and spirituality are identified as separate terms, they can still have impact and influence on one another. In Astin et al.’s study, the researchers sought to discover the relationship between attending college and the religiosity and spirituality of students.

After an initial review of research, Astin et al. (2011) identified twelve content areas to be considered when creating measures for spirituality and religiousness. Once the content areas were identified, the researchers created a 175–item survey specifically regarding spirituality and religiousness, along with another 50 – 60 items regarding students’ activities and achievements and conducted a pilot study surveying 3,680 college juniors attending a diverse sample of 46 colleges and universities in 2003. The researchers performed a factor analysis to condense the categories into a smaller set of scales (p. 17 – 18). This survey was named the College Students’ Beliefs and Values (CSBV) Survey. After the pilot study was completed and the data was analyzed, Astin et al. categorized all of the measures and content into ten measures – five focused on spiritual development and the other five focused on religious development. The spiritual development measures were spiritual quest, equanimity, ethic of caring, charitable

involvement, and ecumenical worldview. The religious development measures were religious commitment, religious engagement, religious/social conservatism, religious skepticism, and religious struggle.

With the ten identified measures, Astin et al. (2011) revised their CSBV Survey to focus on the ten measures and surveyed 112,232 college freshmen entering 236 diverse colleges and universities in 2004. The CSBV was administrated one final time in 2007 to 14,527 students who were randomly selected from the original 112,232 students who completed the survey three years prior. The final submission was conducted to measure changes in students' spiritual and religious qualities during college. The data was analyzed using blocked regression analyses, along with multiple correlations at key points. To supplement the data, Astin et al. also facilitated focus groups with students from eleven of the universities participating in the study, along with personal interviews of both students enrolled and faculty members.

For all five of the spiritual measures; spiritual quest, equanimity, ethic of caring, charitable involvement, and ecumenical worldview, there were significant differences between students' freshmen and junior years. Spiritual quest, which deals with individuals' search for meaning and purpose in life, became more important to students as they continued through college ("high scoring students" increased from 24% to 33%). Factors that influenced an increased awareness of spiritual growth included self-reflection, meditation, and encouragement from professors to explore spiritual development. Equanimity is the quality that allows individuals to deal with stressful situations and experiences. Astin et al. (2011) also found that growth in equanimity occurred during students' tenure at college ("high scoring students" increased from 19% to 23%). The researchers suggest a number of strategies for colleges and

universities to employ to create an environment that promotes healthy equanimity, such as leadership training, and participation in student-led organizations.

Ethic of caring, which regards caring about others, showed significant growth during college (“high scoring students” increased from 14% to 27%). Ecumenical worldview deals with how connected individuals feel with the world around them. Ecumenical worldview also experienced overall growth from freshmen to junior years (“high scoring students” increased from 13% to 18%). However, charitable involvement, which affords students the opportunity to actually take action to care for others, was the only spirituality measure that experienced a decline in involvement (“high scoring students” decreased from 12% to 9%). Astin et al. (2011) suggested that the reason for the decline of charitable involvement was primarily a decline in community service participation. The researchers also stated that all three of these categories can be influenced by practices that allow students to engage with others who have different life experiences and perspectives.

The five religious measures were a bit more varied in their results. For religious commitment, which is students’ self-assessment of how well they follow religious teaching in everyday life, there was no change in individuals with high scores of religious commitment (23% in both 2004 and 2007 surveys) and less than 30% changed their level of commitment at all. Religious engagement is regarding the external contributors of religiousness, one area specifically addressed in this study was attendance to religious services, which noticed a steep decline (“frequent attendance students” decreased from 44% to 25%, while “nonattendance students” increased from 20% to 38%). Astin et al. (2011) attributed this discrepancy between the consistency of religious commitment and the decline of religious engagement to the fact that students began associating their religious commitment with new practices that they began in

college, such as religious campus organizations or taking religious studies classes, as opposed to the previous practice of attending a religious service.

Religious/social conservatism was a reflection of students' positions on social issues, such as abortion and casual sex. Overall, students shifted from a conservative view to a more liberal perspective in the majority of categories mentioned (students who disagreed with abortion decreased from 48% to 40% and students who disagreed with the proposition of casual sex decreased from 55% to 48%). The one area that increased the conservative perspective was the concept of God as a "father-figure" (from 37% to 41%). Astin et al. (2011) posited that because the conservative perspective is the minority perspective on college campuses, students are more likely to shift towards more liberal views because it is the prevalent belief in their surrounding environment. The same reasoning could be used to justify the increase of students who experienced religious struggle in college ("high scoring students" increased from 9% to 13%). Religious struggle is the category where individuals question the basis of their beliefs. The last category measured by Astin et al. was religious skepticism. Religious skepticism is when individuals begin questioning their beliefs to the extent where they no longer hold the same beliefs. Religious skepticism noticed a very small change ("high scoring students increased from 19% to 20%) even though some of the subcategories noticed significant change.

Astin et al.'s (2011) *Cultivating the Spirit* goes in-depth regarding measures of spirituality and religiousness. The five categories of spirituality (spiritual quest, equanimity, ethic of caring, charitable involvement, and ecumenical worldview) provide helpful scales by which to measure spiritual development and spiritual growth. The researchers' extensive study also gives a comprehensive outlook and explanation of just how significant the relationship is between attending college and spiritual/religious development.

In Otto and Harrington's (2016) meta-analysis of research regarding spiritual formation, Astin et al.'s (2011) study was mentioned as validating previous findings of a waning interest in religious practice of students in higher education institutions. Otto and Harrington (2016) also explained that as the significance of higher education has increased, interest in how higher education institutions influence spiritual growth has increased as well. The authors reviewed the history of spiritual formation in education, stating that Christian scholasticism had been encouraged since the earliest churches were formed. Otto and Harrington also discussed how education was not only emphasized to provoke thoughts, but also to promote action. The authors also go on to review research that stressed the importance of the emerging adults' stage of life when it comes to social and spiritual development.

Continuing with research focused on spiritual development, Otto and Harrington (2016) specifically addressed how Christian colleges assist in spiritual formation of college students, citing that Christian universities must incorporate spiritual formation in the classroom as well as encourage Christian values through a holistic community. Otto and Harrington mentioned challenges to creating a holistic community on Christian universities, which included lack of diversity on Christian college campuses, the rise of postmodern philosophy, and the rise of secularization. One of the focal points that Otto and Harrington (2016) addressed is the broad strokes used by many researchers to define spiritual formation to be as inclusive as possible as well as an assessment tool for Christian colleges to better facilitate spiritual formation on their campuses. The broad terms used for spiritual growth are important to note because many do not give an accurate portrayal of spiritual growth in regard to Christian students attending colleges and universities, while the assessment is crucial to protecting religious freedoms of Christian institutions. Otto and Harrington's study supported the need for continued research regarding

Christians in college and pointed out a number of variables that could influence Christian students' spiritual growth.

The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCCU) added to the body of knowledge by creating a task force to develop a definition and assessment tool for spiritual formation (CCCCU, 2011) and submitted a report of their findings. The CCCCU achieved their goals by conducting a three-phase, multi-year project. Phase one developed a core definition of spiritual formation. Phase two was designed to identify spiritual formation programs from Christian higher education institutions and recognize connections between intentional programs and positive spiritual formation results. Phase three consisted of creating a spiritual formation assessment instrument and then apply the tool to CCCCU institutions. The CCCCU began with a meta-analysis, which was prepared by two scholars at the University of Texas in 2010. The summary of the meta-analysis concluded that while Christian colleges and universities do produce higher levels of moral and spiritual development, it is possible this is only due to the fact that Christian institutions attract students who already have a propensity for spiritual growth and religious behaviors. The major theme of the study was that there is a lot of room for improvement for Christian higher education institutions in assessment and practice.

The CCCCU (2011) took the results of the meta-analysis and began to discuss during a symposium in 2010 how they could improve the practice and assessment of spiritual growth for students attending Christian universities. The CCCCU recognized a few variables of higher education that connected to spiritual formation, such as students' phase of life, importance of community, and raising self-awareness. There were a number of questions that were addressed by the CCCCU committee in an effort to provide clarity, including what are core definitional elements of spiritual formation and what steps do CCCCU campuses take to facilitate the spiritual

formation of students? One idea that was identified was the principle that spiritual formation is approached on college campuses in both academic settings and as part of the residence life experience. Once all of the relevant questions were addressed in the symposium, a working definition of spiritual formation was created, and sixteen core definitional elements were stated to supplement the definition.

After the definition and core elements were formed, the CCCU (2011) shifted to phase two by publishing a Request for Proposals from schools with comprehensive plans that promoted spiritual formation. The CCCU report concluded with a course of action where these submitted plans would then be reviewed and programs that met the criteria established by the spiritual formation guidelines would be chosen. The CCCU report concluded with a plan to create an assessment instrument that would measure intentional programs' ability to fulfill the goal of encouraging spiritual formation as defined by the report. This report is significant as it established the importance of intentional practices to promote spiritual formation and confirmed the need for further research regarding spiritual growth as it relates to Christians attending colleges, albeit limited only to students attending Christian colleges and universities.

Capeheart–Meningall (2005) presented a review of literature that shifted focus of spiritual development of college students outside of the classroom. The author provided evidence that spiritual development is integral to overall development (p. 31). Capeheart–Meningall made the simplified distinction between spirituality and religiosity as spirituality being an individual's construct of purpose and meaning while religiosity is more central to a shared system of beliefs within an organized community of faith. The literature review continued by highlighting transformative learning as being crucial to spiritual development, suggesting that spirituality transforms students in college into different people after their tenure

in school. Capeheart–Meningall promoted incorporating spiritual development as an intentional focus for student affairs personnel. Capeheart–Meningall concluded the review by identifying five approaches to including spiritual development in college campus life outside of the classroom: 1) view spiritual development as an internal process associated with identity development, 2) include the principle of balance with the development of spirituality, 3) align spiritual development with connectedness with the surrounding community, 4) understand that spiritual development involves deriving meaning and purpose in life, and 5) acknowledge that spiritual development incorporates exploring a relationship with an intangible power beyond human understanding. Capeheart–Meningall’s article reinforced the need for universities to study and include positive spiritual development practices for students.

Hartley (2004) employed a narrative, explanatory synthesis of research focusing on how the college environment affects students’ religious faith. Hartley discussed previous research that supported the idea of students becoming more engaged in religious practices than ever before. The author reviewed the history of higher education, going over how higher education institutions were originally established by religious organizations, but then shifted towards a more secularized perspective in the 20th century. Hartley addressed how this shift affected spiritual development of college and university students, which generally declined in religious practices and values. This decline of religious practices led to more individualized spiritual growth of students, along with increased tolerance of the differing religious beliefs. Hartley included studies which outlined differences in students’ spiritual development based on their college environments, noting that students who attended more secularized institutions experienced greater decreases in conventional religious affiliation.

Hartley (2004) affirmed Fowler's (1981) research when emphasizing that a change in religious belief is not unexpected for students in college as they are experiencing a shift from towards the individuative/reflective stage of faith. Hartley's (2004) results discovered consistent declines in religious activity among students, even more than emerging adults of the same age who had little to no college experience. While addressing limitations of the study, Hartley mentioned limited numbers of studies, insufficient study designs, and little data on the effects of specific campus environments. Hartley's narrative, explanatory synthesis emphasized the need for further research regarding spiritual development of students in college, even going so far as to outline specific areas to be studied, such as the influence of different campus environments.

Kimball, Cook, Boyatzis, and Leonard (2016) conducted such a study using a longitudinal, mixed methods approach to assess spiritual seeking, spiritual dwelling, and the dialectical process of both for emerging adults who recently graduated from college. Kimball et al. studied a sample of 77 Christian emerging adults twice over a two-year period, using two separate samples of 2006 graduates ($n = 39$) and 2008 graduates ($n = 38$). The researchers' purpose of the study was to measure Christian emerging adults' commitment to their current religious practices (spiritual dwelling) along with their spiritual exploration and spiritual questioning (spiritual seeking) and how Christians emerging adults balance these two factors. Kimball et al. received participants from two Christian liberal arts colleges in the United States and surveyed them at two different times; once close to their graduation date and a second time two years postgraduation. Kimball et al. obtained data from three groups of graduates: the 2008 graduates soon after their graduation ($n = 39$), both 2006 and 2008 graduates two years after their graduation ($n = 77$), and the 2006 graduates four years after their graduation ($n = 38$). The researchers utilized a 12-item Likert scale questionnaire to measure the spiritual questing of the

participants and conducted over the phone and face-to-face interviews to gather qualitative data regarding spiritual seeking.

Kimball et al. (2016) discovered five conceptual categories of experiences from the interviews: 1) personal experiences, 2) communal experiences, 3) collaborative experiences, 4) belief-oriented experiences, and 5) awe-inspiring experiences. For the quantitative measure of the study, the researchers conducted chi-square tests comparing the five experiences across the three groups of graduates. Kimball et al. discovered that the oldest graduates (graduates who had graduated four years prior to the interviews) offered significantly more narratives regarding communal experiences ($\chi^2(2, N = 53) = 11.78, p < .01$). While awe-inspiring experiences were high for recent graduates, dropped for two-year postgraduates, and increased for four-year postgraduates ($\chi^2(2, N = 53) = 7.91, p < .05$). The researchers also identified five themes regarding spiritual change from the interviews as well: 1) change in spiritual beliefs/knowledge, 2) vague spiritual growth, 3) increased spiritual integration, 4) increased spiritual depth, and 5) minimal/no spiritual change. Kimball et al. performed chi-square tests on the five themes of spiritual change as well which revealed two significant findings. First, four-year postgraduates offered significantly more narratives involving increased spiritual integration ($\chi^2(2, N = 32) = 8.92, p < .05$) and fewer narratives regarding vague spiritual growth ($\chi^2(2, N = 49) = 14.67, p < .01$).

Kimball et al.'s mixed methods study yielded a few different noteworthy findings about emerging adults' relational spirituality. First, recent graduates may exhibit high spiritual seeking, which wanes by two years postgraduation. Also, most of the spiritual experiences of recent graduates are more personally focused than communally focused. Additionally, four-year

postgraduates tend to have a clearer sense of spiritual change than more recent graduates. All of these findings confirm the significance of emerging adults' time in college in regard to their personal quest of spiritual seeking and spiritual dwelling, even if college students and recent graduates may not fully comprehend the spiritual change taking place during their college tenure.

Hall and Edwards (2016) conducted a longitudinal, factor analysis study designed to investigate the spiritual development of Evangelical Christian students attending a Christian college over a four-year time span. During the study, participants ($N = 837$) were contacted at eight different points during the four-year time period between Fall of 2003 and Spring of 2008. For the study, Hall and Edwards created the Spiritual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ), using previously validated Likert-scale measures and four other scales developed for this specific study: the Spiritual Practices Frequency scale, the Spiritual Services scale (SSS), the Spiritual Community scale (SCS), and the Prayer Type Frequency scale (PTF). All of the scales were designed to measure a total of nine domains regarding spiritual development: 1) interpersonal functioning, 2) psychological well-being, 3) spiritual practices, 4) religious and spiritual commitment, 5) attachment to God, 6) spiritual quest, 7) spiritual service, 8) spiritual community, and 9) spiritual well-being.

Hall and Edwards (2016) used the nine domain measures throughout the study and discovered quite a few different findings. Some of the more significant findings were that participants frequency of engagement in private spiritual practices decreased over time ($t(1,645) = -7.249, b = -.087, p < .001$), sense of centrality decreased ($t(1,658) = -21.942, b = -.226, p < .001$), religious involvement had a slight increase from T1 to T2, but then experienced a continuous decrease thereafter ($t(1,657) = -4.783, b = -.038, p < .001$), and participants reported a decreasing awareness of God's presence and communication ($t(1,048) = -14.795, b = -.172, p <$

.001). Overall, Hall and Edwards' study revealed that spirituality decreased across eight of the nine domains of the study (with spiritual quest being the only domain that increased). The researchers' results suggested that students in Christian colleges become less engaged and struggle more in spirituality. That being said, the results also show the complexity of spirituality as the eight time points identified nonlinear changes throughout the length of the study. The results of the study showed the complex nature of spiritual development throughout emerging adults' college tenure and gives an expected trajectory for college students' spiritual development over time, specifically for Christian students attending a Christian university.

Bailey, Jones, Hall, Wang, and McMartin (2016) conducted two grounded theory qualitative analyses of Christian college students ($N = 18$) that explored spiritual experiences of participants and looked for themes regarding emerging adults' perceived relationship with God and compared differences between spiritual exemplars ($n = 8$) and spiritual nonexemplars ($n = 10$). Bailey et al. gathered their sample from a Christian university through nominations of students from the Resident Directors. Both analyses utilized the Relational Spirituality Interview (RSI) for all 18 participants and interviews were conducted face-to-face. For the first analysis of general themes regarding relational spirituality, Bailey et al. identified three positive themes: 1) pursuing authenticity in perceived relationship with God, 2) maturing in spiritual development, and 3) having corrective relational experiences with God. The researchers discovered three negative themes as well: 1) guarding against emotional vulnerability with God, 2) fluctuating in feeling connected to God, and 3) experiencing frequent emotional insecurity in perceived relationship to God. Significant findings included participants placing a high value of being genuine with God ($n = 15$, 83%) and participants felt engaged in the spiritual development process ($n = 16$, 89%). Conversely, many participants also described having difficulty being

honest with God (n = 11, 61%) and sometimes experienced emotional insecurity in their perceived relationship to God (n = 16, 89%).

The second analysis focused on differences between participants nominated as both spiritually mature (n = 8) and spiritually immature (n = 10). There were three themes that emerged regarding the second analysis: 1) taking ownership of faith, 2) being shaped by spiritual community, and 3) facing spiritual pain. Regarding the second analysis, Bailey et al. discovered that spiritually mature individuals felt like they already had complete ownership of their faith (n = 7, 88%), while spiritually immature individuals stated they believed they were just beginning to own their personal faith (n = 9, 90%). Additionally, exemplar (spiritually mature) individuals emphasized the importance of a spiritual community (n = 5, 63%), while nonexemplar (spiritually immature) individuals expressed a more casual and disconnected attitude towards spiritual community. Lastly, the difference identified between exemplar and nonexemplar participants was that exemplar participants actively accepted their spiritual pain (n = 8, 100%) and nonexemplar participants chose to cognitively mask their spiritual pain (n = 10, 100%). The results of the study add evidence to the body of work of the religiousness and spirituality of emerging adults and affirm the complexity of spiritual development during this phase of life while in college.

Relationships between Residency and other Variables

Research regarding residency status has been done covering both how other variables affect residency choice and how residency affects other variables (DiBello, Benz, Miller, Merrill, & Cary, 2018; Kuh, 2000; Nelson, Misra, Sype, & Mackie; 2016; Turley, 2006). There have also

been studies that make the distinction between the commuter students' college experience versus the living on campus students' college experience (Jacoby & Garland, 2004; Pascarella, Bohr, Nora, Zusman, Inman, & Desler, 1992). While various studies have shown that residency status has influence on other variables, it remains unclear if residency status has any influence on the spiritual growth of emerging adults in college. As the popularity, availability, and access of colleges become more widespread, it is important to note how these changes to college access influence emerging adults on every level, including spiritually.

Pascarella, Bohr, Nora, Inman, and Desler (1992) conducted a study that tested the hypothesis that living on campus fosters cognitive growth more so than commuting to campus. In their study, Pascarella et al. collected a sample size ($N = 210$) of college freshman attending the university of Chicago, with students who lived on campus ($n = 40$) and students who lived off campus ($n = 170$). The researchers created a pretest–posttest, quasi–experimental study, which was designed to measure freshman year gains in reading comprehension, mathematical reasoning, and critical thinking of resident and commuter students. Initial data was collected in the fall of 1991, which included a survey that gathered students' demographic information and the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP). Data was collected again in the spring of 1992 as participants retok the CAAP and comparisons were made between the first set of scores from the fall of 1991 and the second set of scores from the spring of 1992. The researchers also analyzed covariates including scores from all three categories of the CAAP, student age, total number of credit hours students were enrolled during freshmen year, average hours worked per week, and a measure of academic motivation.

The results of Pascarella et al.'s (1992) study showed that freshmen who lived on campus had significant gains in the area of critical thinking over freshmen who commuted ($F = 7.37, p <$

.01). The results also indicated higher gains in reading comprehension and mathematics for freshmen living on campus, but those results were not statistically significant. Pascarella et al. provided a study that showed potential differences for students living on campus and students commuting. This study made a clear distinction that residence status does have an impact on the development of college students but focused primarily on the cognitive performance of students instead of taking a holistic approach that would take students' social, mental, and spiritual development into consideration.

Additionally, Jacoby and Garland (2004) recognized the challenges faced by commuter students and sought to provide strategies to help commuters be more successful overall. In Jacoby and Garland's narrative synthesis, there was a list of concerns that commuters face that students living on-campus do not encounter as often, such as transportation, multiple-life roles, and integrating support networks. The researchers go on to express ways that student affairs professionals can better facilitate and meet the specific needs faced by commuter students. These suggestions include incorporating more financial aid, employment opportunities, orientations for both students and families, learning communities, information technology, and career guidance specifically designed for commuter students. Jacoby and Garland's focused study on commuter students enhances the distinction between the needs of students living at home and students living on campus. Yet again, the focus is primarily on the academic and professional needs of students.

Alfano and Eduljee (2013) directed a study designed to review the relationship between work, levels of involvement, and academic performance between residential and commuter students. For their study, Alfano and Eduljee gathered a sample of students from a private college in the Northeast United States (N = 108). The sample was divided into residential

students ($n = 66$) and commuter students ($n = 42$) and the study measured all of the students' demographic information, mean GPA, job status, and level of involvement in school-sponsored activities. Alfano and Eduljee utilized four different instruments to measure all of the variables. The first simply asked for demographic information, residential status, job status, and commute time to the campus for commuters. The second instrument measured statistics related to the participants' job status, such as hours worked per week and the number of jobs an individual held as well as a Likert-scale measuring the stress level of students' jobs. The third instrument was focused on measuring levels of involvement on campus in regard to sporting events attended, student activity events attended, and interactions with peers and professors. The final instrument was a Likert-scale questionnaire regarding students' perceptions of overall involvement.

The results of Alfano and Eduljee's (2013) study showed there was no significant relationship between hours worked and GPA for either residential students ($r = -.05$, $p > .05$) or commuter students ($r = .209$, $p < .05$). However, when measuring levels of involvement in school sponsored activities, there was a much bigger discrepancy between residential students (21.2% of students participated in 0 school sponsored activities) and commuter students (66.7% of students participated in 0 school sponsored activities). There was also a significant difference in levels of stress ($F(1,74) = 7.04$, $p < .01$) that showed that commuter students ($f = 3.30$ ($SD = 1.18$)) experienced higher levels of stress than residential students ($f = 2.55$ ($SD = 1.20$)). This study adds to the body of knowledge regarding different experiences in college between commuter students and residential students, but focuses solely on work and levels of involvement of these two populations while there are other variables that could be considered and measured to gain a better distinction between the two groups.

Conversely, Martin and Kilgo (2015) conducted a study that was not centered on any of these variables but focused on psychological well-being of students and the differences between commuter and noncommuter students. The researchers used data from the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNS), which conducted a longitudinal study from three cohorts of students: 2006 to 2010, 2007 to 2011, and 2008 to 2012. Martin and Kilgo focused on the psychological well-being data, which was measured using the Ryff Scales of Psychological well-being. The Ryff Scales of Psychological well-being used six subscales: 1) autonomy, 2) environmental mastery, 3) personal growth, 4) positive relations with others, 5) purpose in life, and 6) self-acceptance. Martin and Kilgo combined all six scores into one mean score for each student. The researchers used all three cohorts of students and was able to put together a sample of commuter students ($n = 1,027$) and a control sample of resident students ($n \approx 4,000$). Table 4 shows the results of Martin and Kilgo's study, identifying the means of psychological well-being for both commuter and noncommuter students.

Overall Martin and Kilgo (2015) did not find any statistically significant changes in the psychological well-being between commuter and noncommuter students. The researchers looked at these results as a positive trend in the right direction and encouraged student affairs professionals to continue to provide services and structures that are specifically designed to support commuter students. While this study did not show any significant difference in psychological well-being of commuter and noncommuter students, it does continue to shed light on the fact that commuter and residential students do have different needs and it is important for educators and student affairs professionals to recognize these differences and treat both of these populations uniquely from one another.

Table 4

Means of Psychological Well-being

	<u>End of First Year</u>		<u>End of Fourth Year</u>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Commuter Students	4.51	0.63	4.75	0.58
Noncommuter students	4.45	0.63	4.72	0.60

Source: Martin, G. L. & Kilgo, C. A. (2015) Exploring the impact of commuting to campus on psychological well-being. *New Directions for Student Services* 150, 35–43. doi: 10.1002/ss

DiBello, Benz, Miller, Merrill, and Carey (2018) concentrated on a different variable in their study as they examined how residence status affected students' likeliness to participate in health risk behaviors. DiBello et al.'s research consisted of gathering a sample size (N = 63,555) of students from 157 college campuses who completed the National College Health Assessment Survey (NCHA) in Spring 2011 and used logistic regression analyses to measure participant use and involvement in risk behavior such as use of alcohol and illicit drugs as well as sexual risk behaviors. The researchers divided the participants into two groups: individuals who lived in some form of on-campus housing and individuals who lived in off-campus housing, independent of parents. DiBello et al. analyzed the statistics of five different categories: 1) drinking status, 2) tobacco use, 3) marijuana use, 4) illicit drug use, and 5) sexual risk. The results of the study discovered that students who lived off-campus were more likely to be involved in risk behavior in all five of the categories: drinking (OR = 1.49, 95% CI = 1.43, 1.55, $p < .001$), tobacco use (OR = 1.37, 95% CI = 1.31, 1.41, $p < .001$), marijuana use (OR = 1.49, 95% CI = 1.43, 1.57, $p < .001$), illicit drug use (OR = 1.60, 95% CI = 1.48, 1.72, $p < .001$), and sexual risk (OR = 1.39, 95% CI = 1.31, 1.47, $p < .001$). DiBello et al. concluded their study by stating that living off-campus independently or with peers is an important risk factor for health

risk behaviors among emerging adults. This idea supports the converse idea that on-campus housing can be a refuge and is more likely to help promote health behaviors and diminish the possibility of health risk behaviors of students. It is worth noting that this study does not measure the health risk behaviors of students who live at home with parents.

Summary

Erickson's (1980) psychosocial development and Fowler's (1981) stages of faith provided the theoretical framework for this case study, specifically Erickson's (1980) intimacy vs. isolation stage and Fowler's (1981) individuative/reflective stage. Both of these stages are associated with the same stage of life that individuals normally transition into at of a traditional college experience. Arnett (2000) provided a more concise terminology for this phase of life as emerging adulthood. As research regarding the college experience became more prominent, the term emerging adults became more associated with college students. With the increased variety of accessibility of a college education, research has also been devoted to measuring the effects of different residency choices for college students. For this case study, literature was reviewed exploring all of these topics: the intimacy vs. isolation stage of psychosocial development, the individuative/reflective stage of faith, spiritual development of emerging adults attending college, and relationships between residency status and other variables in college. The prominence of both spiritual development research involving emerging adults and college residency status research in the 21st century has added a number of studies to the body of knowledge on the subjects, but the two topics have not been studied relationally to one another. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology used to guide this study.

III. METHODOLOGY

Introduction and Overview

This chapter describes the procedures, processes, and reasoning for the design of this research study. The chapter includes in-depth information about the research sample, research design, data analysis, ethical considerations, and issues of trustworthiness.

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between Christian emerging adults who were first-year college students' residency choices and their spiritual growth during that time. First, this qualitative study sought to explore how first-year college students perceive their spiritual growth in the first year of college. Second, this study investigated how the university environment impacted that spiritual growth. Third, the study examined how the residency decisions made by college students can correlate with their spiritual growth. During this study, there was also an opportunity for these students to make recommendations and give advice to first-year college students who are Christians on how to be intentional in their spiritual growth when first starting their college careers.

Research Design

This dissertation study used a case study approach to address each of the research questions. This research approach was chosen after examining the five qualitative approaches outlined by Creswell (2013). A narrative study was not viewed as appropriate because the study was not focused on the stories of the participants as much as the changes that occurred before and after their first semester of college. Narrative studies focus on the chronology of the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2013), while this study focused specifically on the

correlation between residency status and spiritual growth. A phenomenon that was shared between the participants was not being studied, as there were specific differences between each subject's college experience (residency status and spiritual growth), so a phenomenological study would not have been feasible for the researcher's topic. A grounded theory study seeks to generate or discover a theory for a process or action using a large number of participants (Creswell, 2013). Since this study was observing a small number of participants and did not seek to generate a theory, a grounded theory study was not appropriate. Although this study does indeed focus on an entire culture-sharing group (first-year college students), there was no immersion in the day-to-day lives of the participants, which ruled out the use of an ethnographic research for this study.

Case study research focuses on bounded systems within a real-life contemporary setting (Zahle, 2019). In this case, the bounded systems are residency status and spiritual growth in the first-year college setting. Creswell (2013) identified three different types of case studies: the single instrumental case study, the collective case study, and the intrinsic case study. This study best fits the single instrumental case study, wherein a researcher focuses on one issue or concern and selects a single bounded case to illustrate the issue. Researchers use case studies to identify specific cases and provide in-depth understanding of the case and not just a general overview of the case. In a case study, the researcher is only supposed to observe the participants of the study and should try to affect the participants lives as little as possible (Zahle, 2019). The bounded system to study was selected, along with participants, and data was collected from participants to report case themes from the bounded system.

Context of the Study

Interviews and data collection for the students who participated in this study occurred at agreed upon locations between the participants and the researcher. All interviews occurred in the state of Florida, and all participants graduated from the same Christian high school. The school was one of five schools that were contacted and was chosen based on having the highest number of viable candidates respond to the voluntary survey. The academy is in a suburban area of Florida with a primarily middle-class population, although the school does represent a diverse population of students and families based on race and socioeconomic status.

Research Participants

After approval by Southeastern University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), the research participants selected for this study were chosen using criterion-based sampling. To obtain prospective research participants, five administrators of Christian academies were reached out to and were provided with access to the initial survey link through SurveyMonkey. The administrators were requested to send the survey to their most recent graduating class with an informed consent email, asking the students to complete the survey, which included the option to provide contact information voluntarily if they were willing to do a follow-up interview if they met the following criteria established by the researcher:

- They must identify as first-year college students.
- They must be between the ages of 18 – 21.
- They will be enrolled in college as full-time students.
- They are professing Christians.

- They come from a Christian home (a home where at least one parent identifies as Christian).

When all of the surveys had been collected, participants were chosen from the school who had the most viable candidates from the respondents. From the selected Christian academy, six participants were found who fit all of the established criteria and were willing to be interviewed.

Research Design and Data Collection

To determine whether participants met the criteria for research, a brief survey was designed to acquire background information about the prospective research participants. The following questions were included in the survey sent to prospective research participants:

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your age?
3. Which type of university/college will you be attending this fall?
4. Please provide the name of the university or college you will be attending?
5. Which of the following statements best fits your planned residency status for your first semester of college?
6. During your high school tenure, did you participate in any dual enrollment or advanced placement classes that required you to attend classes at a college or university?
7. Do you identify as a Christian?
8. Do either one of your parents identify as a confessing Christian?

9. What church do you attend?
10. If you are willing to be interviewed based on your responses, please leave your email address below:

This qualitative study addressed the following research questions:

Q1: What are first-year Christian college students' perceptions of their spiritual growth since their arrival at university?

2. How do first-year Christian college students' experiences at university influence their spiritual growth?

Q2: How do first-year Christian college students' residency choices influence students' spiritual growth during the first year of college or university?

Survey participants who expressed interest in participating in this study, provided contact information, and met all of the selection criteria were sent a copy of the informed consent document (Appendix B), and an interview time was scheduled between them and the researcher. The students who were selected to participate in this study met the aforementioned criteria, were starting their first semester of college at a variety of different universities, and had a variety of residency statuses, including staying home for college, moving away to live on campus, and moving away to live off campus. Selected participants were all at least 18 years old.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted of six first-year college students, both before and after their first semester of college, in order to gather qualitative responses to the research questions. According to Creswell (2013), this number of case study participants "should provide ample opportunity to identify themes of the cases as well as conduct cross-case theme analysis"

(p. 157). The semi-structured interviews consisted of the research questions and other ancillary questions for follow-up and clarification. The participants chose a neutral setting for the interviews so that each participant felt comfortable sharing his or her experiences. The interviews ranged from ten to twenty minutes in length.

Strategies for Validating Findings

The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed to ensure accuracy of the transcriptions. Each transcript was reviewed to analyze the qualitative results of the interviews. Significant statements and phrases from participants' responses to the interview questions and the research questions were highlighted then extracted from the interviews. A table was created to summarize overall themes of each participant's responses to each question. Meanings were formed from significant statements and then formed as themes. These themes were then formed into clusters and categorized.

A preliminary analysis of the interview data was conducted by coding specific themes by color. Validation was solicited from the research participants by asking them to compare the researcher's descriptions with their own lived experiences.

Each research question was addressed by reporting the results of the compiled qualitative data analysis. Conclusions derived from the research were discussed, and recommendations for future research were proposed.

Ethical Considerations

Before the study was conducted, IRB approval was first received from Southeastern University. All research participants who expressed interest in participating in this study were

given an informed consent form which described the research study, its implications, and possible benefits and risks. All participants were assured that audio recordings and notes taken during the interviews would only be accessible to the researcher, primary investigator, and the dissertation committee's methodologist. Creswell (2013) encouraged researchers to take steps to ensure ethical research and requires that human subject review boards must give permission before any research can be conducted. There was no potential risk to individuals who chose to participate in this study.

All participants were given pseudonyms when the data were analyzed and reported in order to protect identities. All notes, transcriptions, and any other identifying information were stored in both a USB drive and on a password-protected computer accessible only to the researcher. The USB drive was stored in a locked filing cabinet, and all files will be permanently deleted from the drive and computer in five years.

Methods to Address Validity, Reliability, and Assumptions of Generalizability

Creswell (2013) outlined the steps of a research study into an order of sequential steps that are introducing the focus of the study; data collection; analysis and representation; setting standards for validation and evaluation; and the conclusion along with recommendations for future research. Recommendations of the research committee were adhered to, and research questions were refined to ensure a case study alignment. Zahle (2019) stated that the most common methods of data collection for case studies are participant observation and qualitative interviews. Throughout the study, the guidance of the committee's chair and methodologist were sought, records of research activities were maintained, and only the activities approved by the committee and Southeastern Institutional Review Board were carried out.

Creswell (2013) identified challenges to qualitative interviews which included equipment issues, the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, and the “taxing” effort on the interviewer. Creswell discussed Kvale and Brinkmann’s idea that interviews “should not be regarded as a completely open and free dialogue between egalitarian partners” (p. 173). Instead, the suggestion is made for the researcher and participant to be equal partners in the interview and working in collaboration with one another. Attempting to create this collaborative interviewing model, comments were made with the participants based on their responses that allowed interpretations and reflections of answers to interview questions between both the interviewer and interviewee. Criterion sampling was used to identify, select, and conduct one-on-one interview with participants (Creswell, 2013). A digital recorder was used to record one-on-one interviews with each participant. Each interview was transcribed and emailed to each individual participant for validation. To ensure reliability within the study, the same interview protocol (Appendix C) was used with all participants. Although participants were aware of the other participants, there was no contact made between them, as each participant began classes at different schools and did not identify as friends or acquaintances with one another. This separation ensured that each participant’s shared living experience was not influenced by any other participant. Findings of the study were not attempted to be generalized to fit larger groups and assumptions of generalizability were addressed by accurately transcribing and reporting interviews of each participant.

Instruments Used in Data Collection

Creswell (2013) highlighted the importance of recording interviews when it comes to the interview process. The interviewer is responsible for making sure that the recording tool accurately records all responses to the interview while the interviewer also takes observational

notes to supplement the transcript of the interview as well. Questions were formed to be somewhat open-ended and nondirectional, like qualitative research questions are suggested to be (Creswell, 2013). A digital recording device and app were used that transcribed while recording the audio as well. Additionally, transcripts were reviewed and edited while listening to the audio for increased accuracy. During the interview, notes were taken on a tablet to write down key words emphasized, facial expressions, significant emotions displayed, and other discernible body language that could not be captured by the recording device. Each interview's length ranged from 5 to 12 minutes.

Procedures

Creswell (2013) recommended that a case study be used when a researcher wants to provide an in-depth understanding of a clearly identifiable case. The researcher should also use multiple sources of data collection, such as observations and interviews. Initially, the researcher, in collaboration with the principal investigator, developed an appropriate topic of inquiry, research questions identifying the purpose of the study, a survey to identify potential participants (Appendix B), and an interview protocol (Appendix C) to investigate and collect data. Creswell (2013) stated identifying the case study that is most useful to the researcher would yield the best results and different perspectives of the problem or process being studied. After the proposal was defended and approval to conduct the study was given, applications were submitted to the university's Institutional Review Board for approval of research involving human subjects.

After approval by the Southeastern University Institutional Review Board, an online survey was disseminated, which was designed to assist in the sample selection (see Appendix B). In phase one of the study, the online survey was sent to four Christian high school academies in

the state of Florida through school administrators and distributed to the recently graduated senior class during the summer after their graduation. These submissions were done to draw a sample of convenience of voluntary research participants who were about to start their first year of college.

Seventeen individuals responded to the survey, and nine of them gave their contact information that allowed them to be contacted for a follow-up interview. Of these nine, only six of them were viable candidates for the study as two respondents were under the age of eighteen, and one respondent had already completed her first year of college. In the sample of convenience, three of the participants were staying home for college, while three of them were going away for college. The six participants were contacted who met the criteria and emailed them the background of the study as well as an informed consent form as well. Participants were also asked to schedule dates, times, and locations for each participant to meet for one-on-one for face-to-face interviews, and they all complied.

Upon arrival for each interview, participants were thanked for their time and willingness to participate in the research study. The purpose of the study was restated and presented to participants with the background of the study along with an adult consent form (Appendix A). Creswell (2013) stressed the importance of receiving accurate data from observational and interview protocols, so the accuracy of the recording device was tested before conducting the interview before each interview.

When each interview concluded, the participants were thanked again, informed them that he would be reaching out for a follow-up interview after their first semester of college, and left the location. Within a few days of each interview, audio files were transcribed by listening to the

recordings. After the initial transcriptions, the audio files were listened to again while reading the transcripts to ensure accuracy. The transcripts were emailed to each of the corresponding participants to validate the findings. The participants did not identify any discrepancies in the transcripts at all. Once accuracy was verified, transcripts were reviewed once more to redact any identifying information of the participants to protect their anonymity. After all the transcript verification was completed, all transcript files were transferred from a password-protected computer to a USB flash drive and placed in a locked filing cabinet.

After the six research participants had completed their first semester of college, each participant was contacted for a follow-up interview. All of the participants consented, and dates, times and locations were scheduled for the second interviews. Upon arrival to each interview, the participants were thanked and then the interview protocol was reviewed to refresh the memory of the participants. Once again, each participant was interviewed face-to-face and one-on-one. This time, an internet application was used on a recording device, which transcribed the interview while it was being audio-recorded. At the end of each interview, the transcript was reviewed with the participant to ensure accuracy. Approval was received for each participant's transcript at the conclusion of each interview. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were thanked for their time and compliance to a second interview. The verified transcripts of the second interview were backed up onto the same USB flash drive that held the initial interviews, and the USB flash drive was returned to the locked filing cabinet.

Data Analysis

Saldana (2016) stated that codifying data allows researchers to arrange things in a systematic order within qualitative research in order to consolidate meanings and explanations.

Saldana's code to theory model, which starts with identifying codes from observations and interview transcripts and clustering those into categories, was used. Once categories were identified, themes and concepts were discovered, which led to the researcher's primary theory and assessment of the research questions. The interview data was analyzed to identify recurring themes within each interview, to determine relationships between and among subjects, and to create accurate profiles of each of the participants. Comparisons were made between the initial interviews before the participants started college and the secondary interviews after the participants completed their first semester of college and recognized relevant statements and significant phrases themes that aligned with research questions and relevant literature that pertained to the study. Significant statements and differences noticed were highlighted and extracted from both the pre-college experience and post-college experience interview transcripts. The themes noticed from the responses and differences of responses from the pre-college experience and post-college experience interviews were categorized, and the research questions were addressed by reporting the results of the compiled group themes. To organize the data, a chart was created with column headers from each participant of the study and organized with row headers for each interview question. Significant statements and themes from the interview transcripts were identified and placed in the corresponding block within the chart.

Saldana (2016) identified coding as a "cyclical act" (p. 8) with one cycling of coding rarely being enough. During the first cycle, essential elements were simply located and highlighted and codes were assigned to statements based on specific meanings and continued the process until he coded all of the participants' responses. The assigned codes were reviewed to see if any codes needed to be updated or reassigned during a second cycle (Saldana, 2016). The importance of identifying similar codes was recognized from the pre-college and post-college

experience, along with differences that occurred between the pre-college and post-college experience interviews. For example, both types of transcripts have codes identifying *positive attitudes* and *negative attitudes*, but only the post-college experience interviews had codes identifying *improving actions* and *declining actions*.

The codes were used to cluster the data into descriptive categories. Saldana (2016) posited that codes and categories are not interchangeable, but in fact, two separate components. “[Saldana] advocate[s] that qualitative codes are essence-capturing and essential elements of the research story that, when clustered together according to similarity and regularity – a pattern – they actively facilitate the development of categories and thus analysis for their connections” (p. 8). Researchers categorize the codes gathered and create new interpretations from the themes resulting from the categorization. These new themes are identified as outcomes of coding and categorization, but not something that is coded itself (Saldana, 2016, p. 13)

Summary

A case study is research that involves real-life and contemporary research that is loosely identified as a methodology but is more accurately described as “choice of what is to be studied” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). Chapter 3 discussed the methodology that was utilized in this study. Following protocol outlined by Yin (2009), the purpose for the study and the case that would be studied were both identified. Next, the case was developed, a purposeful sampling was selected, interviews were conducted, observations were made, data was collected, interviews were transcribed, participants validated transcripts, the data was coded, the codes recognized were categorized, and themes were developed in order to discover the overall meaning of the case study. Appropriate measures were taken to ensure the study was ethical, reliable, and valid.

Chapter 4 discusses the data from the research and gives an in-depth analysis. Codes, categories, and themes derived from the data were shared, along with supporting evidences for those themes. Also, limitations of the study and implications for future research were discussed.

IV. RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to explore the influences between the residency status of Christians who were starting college and their spiritual growth during that time. The study examined details regarding the decisions, actions, and behaviors of participants as they experienced their first semester of college. The goal of this study was to identify themes and differences of spiritual growth from firsthand accounts of participants based on their different residency statuses (whether they stayed home for college or moved away). Chapter four discusses the results of the analyses of the qualitative demographic and interview data gathered in this case study.

Six students who were enrolled in their first semester of college were interviewed. All participants were professing Christians and were raised in homes where at least one parent was identified as a Christian. All six participants were part of the same graduating class from the same private Christian academy. Three of the individuals were males, and three were females. Three of the participants chose to stay home and commute to college, and three of the individuals chose to move away for school and lived on campus. Two of the participants who stayed home and commuted attended the local community college; the third commuter attended a private Christian university. Of the three participants who chose to move away and live on campus for college, two of them attended private universities (one Christian-based) and the third attended a

public state university. Each individual was interviewed at two different times: once prior to beginning their first full semester of college and again following the end of the first semester. Approval for the study was granted by Southeastern University's Institutional Review Board (March 2019). Participants were contacted, and interviews were conducted during August 2019 and again in December 2019. Relevant to the topic of inquiry, Love (2011) indicated the need for continued research concerning faith development and the implications that faith development can have on students in college. Turley (2006) also suggested further research regarding the reasons why parents encourage different residency options for their children, such as whether students should live on campus or stay at home for college.

Methods of Data Collection

Zahle (2019) posited that case studies based on participant observation and interviews rarely start with a single hypothesis but remain open ended to allow for multiple alternative answers and conclusions. Also, the data collected must be relevant and "*descriptively accurate* [italics in original]" (Zahle, 2019, p. 34) to the research question(s). The interview protocol (Appendix D) consisted of six open-ended questions that were followed up with a question asking participants to grade themselves on the previous question using a Likert scale. During the second interviews after the participants' college experience, a 13th question specifically related to their residency status and spiritual growth was added to allow a self-reflection for participants regarding their experience during their first semester at college. Participants signed a consent form (Appendix C) prior to participating in the interview process. Every interview was recorded using a personal recording device. Following the first interviews, the audio files of the interviews were transcribed by the researcher, and transcripts were given to participants to validate the contents. All audio recordings, notes, and transcripts of the data were stored on a

password-protected computer and a USB drive. This same process was repeated for the second interview, which was conducted after the first semester college experience of each participant. The records will be deleted after five years.

The data were analyzed, codes were identified within the data, and Saldana's (2016) suggestion of assigning codes to significant statements that are relevant to the research questions was followed. Because the format of the case study required a pre-college experience interview and post-college experience interview, the coding for both interviews had to be separated so that differences could be more easily identified between the pre-college experience interviews and post-college experience interviews.

Table 5

First Cycle Descriptive Coding (Pre-College Experience Interview)

Code	Description	Number of Participants Who Referenced Code
1	Confidence in spiritual growth	6
2	Uncertainty of spiritual growth	4
3	Practical application of spiritual growth	6
4	Areas of improvement recognized	4
5	External influences/interactions	6
6	Signs of spiritual growth	4
7	Decline/stagnation of spiritual growth	2
8	Direct approach	4
9	Avoidance maneuvers	4

In order to create categories from the codes identified, the transcripts were reviewed and grouped by specific codes that naturally fit together based on the similar responses or functions

associated with each response. Saldana (2016) suggested that codes are best organized into categories, which can eventually be synthesized into major concepts or themes. The data was regrouped from the twelve categories (nine from the pre-college experience interviews and the additional three included in the post-college experience interviews) into four categories. After regrouping the data into four categories, the categories were renamed based on the attributes associated with the participants' responses.

Table 6

First Cycle Descriptive Coding (Post-College Experience Interview)

Code	Description	Number of Participants Who Referenced Code
1	Confidence in spiritual growth	6
2	Uncertainty of spiritual growth	5
3	Practical application of spiritual growth	6
4	Areas of improvement recognized	6
5	External influences/interactions	6
6	Signs of spiritual growth	6
7	Decline/stagnation of spiritual growth	4
8	Direct approach	5
9	Avoidance maneuvers	4
10	Confidence in residency status decision	4
11	Uncertainty in residency status decision	4
12	Challenges to spiritual growth	4

Additionally, during this phase of analysis, the transcripts were reviewed to seek out relationships among the data. Saldana believed that qualitative codes helped to capture the essence of the research, while the categories and themes helped to elaborate on the meaning of

the various codes. After thorough examination, significant statements were identified and then formulated meanings based on the concept referenced. Figure 1 represents the categories created to include the original 12 codes. Creswell (2013) posited that interpreting the data was about moving beyond the codes and categories into the abstract meaning of the data, which could be visually demonstrated through diagrams.

Indicators of Spiritual growth	Indicators of Spiritual Decline	Interactions and Reactions	Reflections of Residential Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence in spiritual growth • Practical application of spiritual growth • Areas of influence recognized • Signs of spiritual growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty of spiritual growth • Decline/stagnation of spiritual growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External influences/interactions • Direct approach • Avoidance maneuvers • Challenges to spiritual growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence in residency status decision • Uncertainty in residency status decision

Figure 1. Categories created from codes

Research Participants

The six research participants all graduated in the spring from a Christian academy in Florida and planned to attend college in the fall. Each of the participants was identified with a given pseudonym. There were three male and three female participants, as well as three participants who chose to stay home and commute to their chosen college and three participants who chose to move to live on-campus. Participants were either 18 or 19 years old at the time of both interviews. The following table illustrates research participants' genders, residence status, and type of university attended.

Table 7

Demographic Data of Research Participants (N=6)

Identifying Name	Gender	Residence Status	Type of University Attended
Emily	Female	Living on campus	Public University
Ella	Female	Living on campus	Private Christian University
Nick	Male	Living at home	Community College
Paul	Male	Living at home	Community College
Rebecca	Female	Living on campus	Public University
Timothy	Male	Living at home	Private Christian University

Research Questions

Six open-ended questions were asked (seven during the post-college experience interview) and six Likert-scale questions (Appendix F) during each interview. These questions aligned to the research questions in order to analyze the themes within the case study. In order to analyze the specific case study, the following two questions (and one sub-question) guided this study:

1. What are the perceptions of first year Christian emerging adults' spiritual growth since their arrival at university?
 - How do Christian emerging adults who are first-year college students' experiences at university influence their spiritual growth?

2. How do residency choices of Christian emerging adults who are first-year college students influence students' spiritual growth during the first year of college or university?

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of first year Christian emerging adults' spiritual growth since their arrival at university?

All six participants shared experiences about their spiritual growth during their first semester in college. Throughout each interview, the participants emphasized different metrics by which they seemed to measure their personal spiritual growth. Ella and Paul stressed spending quality time in prayer and engaging in worship. Nick and Emily highlighted attending religious services, while Rebecca and Timothy focused on fellowship with other Christians as most important to them. As such, along with the measures identified by the interview, all participants skewed to specific areas of identified spiritual growth, which added to their perceptions. Emily stated that her spiritual growth was average during her first semester of college, primarily because of a lack of time and the increased busyness of her school schedule. Similarly, Nick also stated that his spiritual growth did not increase as much as he would have liked due to a busier schedule and a new job:

Just because during the first semester, I didn't get a lot of time to go to church with my family, which is like, we would occasionally do it but now I haven't like at all really. So that's a big thing... Yeah, we were all just so busy with school and then our new jobs.

He also stated that being in college did have an impact on his ability to do practical activities associated with spiritual growth, such as community service. Paul had a similar response after his first semester as he did prior to going to university in that he believed that his spiritual growth

was continually changing and forming: “At this moment, my life is going to college, I feel like [my spiritual formation] is continually changing and continually forming and just finding whatever path I’m on right now.” He also stated that certain spiritual practices, such as going to church, have been consistent even after attending college.

Contrary to Emily, Nick, and Paul, Rebecca had a few more intentional practices and focused on spiritual growth. She stated that her time at college was allowing her to become her own Christian and not to be like everyone else. Rebecca was focused on understanding her own personal faith and exploring the different practical options that helped to form faith, such as different denominations.

Just knowing, like what my own faith is because I think one thing... I was talking to my pastor the other day and he asked me like what church I go to, or like what kind of church. And I said, ‘I’ve been to so many...’ Like different denominations and everything, just, so I kind of want to work on, like, understanding what denomination I really fit in with and understanding all the history and like, the salvation aspects of it all.

Similarly, Ella stated that her spiritual formation was more focused since she was on her own more. She stated that she no longer felt as influenced by outside sources, as she was in high school. She was very confident that she was at a good place with her faith and had more confidence after her first semester in college when it came to practical application of spiritual growth, such as praying, memorizing scripture, and having spiritual conversations. Timothy also experienced spiritual growth, but, although Ella contributed her spiritual growth to a lack of external influences, Timothy credited his spiritual growth to external sources, primarily

professors he met at college who had invested time and energy into a relationship with him.

Timothy also attributed some changes to his practical applications of spiritual growth to practices and strategies he has learned while at university.

I'm studying psychology, [so] I'm using psychological tactics to help [others] out... So to help with growth with the person you need genuine, unconditional acceptance, and proper listening, which means listening to them and then engaging in conversation with them.

There were two distinct perceptions of first-year college students' spiritual growth since arriving at university. Some participants described a perceived stagnation caused by the increased responsibilities of being a college student, whether related to classes, sports, or work.

I feel like there was just so much going on and, like, I found myself kind of going, not going away from it, like, in a bad way, but just I was more focused on, like, God beforehand. And then, there's so much going on [during college] that I found myself, I don't want to say not having time, but kind of going away from that a little bit. But I was still praying and stuff, I just wasn't as focused on it.

Other participants reported a feeling of self-discovery and self-actualization of spiritual growth based on the newfound freedom or resources that were not present prior to attending university.

My spiritual formation, at this point in my life has definitely been more honed in [*sic*], in my experience, going to college. I've been able to just be on my own more, and I think I haven't been... I haven't been able to be more influenced by all the noise. In high school, I feel like there was way more noise and different people around me that I would want to compensate for because of their views and I would just want to adjust how I

would speak because I feel like I didn't want to offend people. So, I feel like my spiritual formation has been able to be honed in [*sic*] and centered.

Sub-question to research question 1: How do the experiences at university influence the spiritual growth of Christian, emerging adults who are first-year college students?

Participant responses revealed a variety of experiences that influenced spiritual growth during their first semester at university. The most common factor that was mentioned by participants was the new time demands that came with being a college student. Nick stated that starting a new job and keeping up with classes was a major hindrance to his ability to consistently attend church services, get time alone for devotions, and be more involved in community service. Emily was an athlete throughout her high school career but declared that the demands of being a college athlete were more intensive than high school athletics, which inhibited her ability to make time for spiritual practices. Paul and Rebecca both equated the adjustment of a new lifestyle as a college student on their inability to be focused on spiritual growth as they were during their time in high school. “

I really didn't do anything while I was at school, it's kind of hard, because I'm...

I think because it was my first semester I was really trying to just get in the groove of, like the classes and everything.

Ella and Timothy did not share this same inability to adjust to time demands accordingly and seemed to not be affected by the changes made in starting college.

Yeah, I think I've grown for sure. I think before I had a figment [of my] imagination of some type of what faith was, but I really got to see what faith has been for me and how it's challenged me, and how to really be a Christian in

certain ways. I'm still growing and of course, how to be Christian in a place where people aren't [Christians].

One of the other experiences that was identified by most of the participants was new relationships that were formed. Through these new relationships, participants had new and interesting interactions and insights. Paul shared about an experience he had at his college with a couple of fellow students who ascribed to the beliefs of the organization called Jehovah's Witnesses. He spent time learning what they believed and sharing his beliefs with them. When it appeared that the two different beliefs were at an impasse, Paul chose to end the interaction.

I've told [the Jehovah's Witnesses], just stuff based of my beliefs and everybody will have a conversation, but it felt, like, right for the... For the first time I did it, but then when he tried doing it again, then I just said, "Look, we don't have the same beliefs, I just won't engage in it." If it's something that's going to, like, change my beliefs, I just won't engage in it.

Rebecca spoke of how she had more interactions with individuals who enjoyed a party lifestyle, and she had to make a choice whether to be a part of that or to hold firm to her personal beliefs. When peer pressure came to her, Rebecca made a decision to not be a part of that lifestyle and stuck to that decision throughout the first semester.

I know I... People asked me, like, about parties and stuff and it's just... I don't if you don't want to do it, just don't. I mean, it sounds kind of stupid, sounds like I'm making it really simple, but if you don't want to... Just don't go into the dorm room, don't go.

Ella mentioned that she felt challenged by people she encountered because of their talent and ability. During this feeling of being challenged, she began to question her purpose and whether or not she was doing what she was truly called to do. At the end of her first semester, she had decided that she was indeed fulfilling her purpose and was more determined to work harder to achieve the goals that she had set for herself.

I felt challenged, because I felt like, the people coming in... I was like, "Wow, these people are really talented." Like, you know, it was just, it was very, like, I start to compare myself in certain things, and I feel like God was really pushing me. I know that He wouldn't put me somewhere He doesn't want me to be you know? Where I don't need to be, like, where I don't need to be.

Emily mentioned friends that she had made who encouraged her spiritual growth by inviting her to attend events and activities hosted by Christian organizations on campus, such as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Timothy identified his professors and mentors as individuals who influenced his spiritual growth while completing his first semester of college. Nick mentioned that the demands of his family relationships did somewhat hinder his spiritual growth during his first semester: "Yeah, you know, like I said, I would say, just that me and my family are really busy during the semester with our school and then also our jobs that we have."

After the completion of their first semester, each of the participants identified the same strategies for equanimity and ethic of caring that they utilized prior to starting college. When it came to charitable involvement, every participant either remained the same or became less involved in serving their community. Yet, Emily did mention that she became a bit more self-aware of her desire to do more when it came to charitable involvement. She even explained that

when she came home for Thanksgiving break, she helped her mom collect items for children to donate to Toys for Tots and reported experiencing joy from giving back. Of the five categories addressed in the interview (i.e. equanimity, ethic of caring, charitable involvement, ecumenical world view, and spiritual quest), spiritual quest was the only category where every participant rated the importance higher, or kept their rating at the already high number, after their first semester of college than prior to starting college.

When asked to reflect on their spiritual growth, each participant had a very different perspective of how their spiritual growth was influenced during their college experience. Emily recognized that there was room for improvement for her spiritual growth but also noticed resources, such as friends and campus organizations, that could help her improve. Ella identified that she felt more challenged as she compared herself to her peers but stated that, in being challenged, she became more confident of her purpose and more determined to work hard in fulfilling that purpose. Nick recognized that his spiritual growth did not improve as much as he would have hoped.

At this point right now, I would say that, that [my spiritual formation] is in the process of it. I would say I'm steady, from [the previous interview], I haven't really, well I have increased a little, but not a ton, or as much as I would have thought.

Paul stated the challenges he now faced as a college student, such as the newfound freedom he gained and making sure that he made the right decisions within that freedom. Rebecca acknowledged that she wanted to make friends that could help encourage her spiritual

growth and that, after the first semester, she felt challenged because none of her current friends were helping in that regard.

And now, I'm trying to become friends with more people in the campus ministries, because the friend group I'm in right now isn't in any of [the campus ministries]. So, it's a little tough because they don't really share that with me, I guess.

Timothy was confident that his spiritual growth had not been hindered in any way as he has depended on relationships with professors and older mentors to help him in his spiritual growth: "Professors and also adults that I've met in my church just, they're pouring into my life, so I don't feel necessarily spiritually hindered." Completing the first semester of college seemed to have a significant influence on the spiritual growth of every participant but in unique and different ways.

Research Question 2: How do the residency choices of Christian emerging adults who are first-year college students influence students' spiritual growth during the first year of college or university?

One of the greatest variables in this study was the residence status of each of the participants of the study. Emily, Ella, and Rebecca all chose to attend universities that were at least 150 miles from their parents, and they lived in on-campus housing during their first semester of college. Nick and Paul chose to stay home and remain living with their parents. Timothy also chose to stay home but remained living with his grandparents with whom he lived prior to starting college. The three participants who lived on-campus cited their decision to do so was based on opportunities provided (academic and sport scholarships), as well as the

opportunity for new experiences and environments. Nick and Timothy stated their decision to remain at home was strictly based on finances. Paul explained that his decision was based on the uncertainty of his future and that he wanted to figure out a life path, which led him to stay at home and attend a community college.

None of the participants mentioned spiritual growth as having any bearing or consideration on their residency decision or college choice. Even so, all of the participants believed that their college experience would have some influence on their individual spiritual growth. In the first interview, prior to their college experience, each participant expressed a generally positive attitude about how going to college could influence their spiritual growth.

For example, Emily discussed how she was thankful that there was a church close to her college's campus, as it would allow her to attend services easily. During a summer visit, Emily even made a friend who expressed interest in attending services at the church as well. Timothy was interested in the new relationships and perspectives that he would meet while attending college. Rebecca viewed college as an opportunity to create a foundation of her own independent faith, stating that she did not want her faith to be dependent on her parents' relationship with God, but she wanted to take more personal responsibility when it came to spiritual disciplines.

So, I'm trying to kind of focus more and I want to get more grounded because I don't want to be just, like, my parents' kid and go [to church] because they go. So, I think that's something I'm trying to focus on while I leave and go to college and everything because I want to grow more because I do realize there are a lot of times that I don't focus on [my faith] as much and I want to put more focus on

myself and my faith. And I want to make that change and I want to, kind of focus more on my growth [and] my spirituality as I go to college, which is kind of opposite of a lot of college kids, I think.

Nick looked forward to exploring areas he was passionate about and gaining more wisdom in spiritual areas, such as the Word of God. Paul wanted more freedom when it came to speak into other people's lives and hoped that moving on to college would allow him that opportunity. Ella had an open-ended response of wanting to continue to grow in the areas that she was already growing in, specifically in regard to serving others.

So, [serving] really hit me and I was, like, "Wow! I really want to help in these kinds of terms." Not only in, like, faith-based [issues], but I really want to be well-rounded in how to communicate in [serving]. So, that's why I'm double majoring in communications [and] public affairs at my school.

During the post-semester interview, the results were more varied compared to the initial hopes of the participants. When asked to score their spiritual growth during their first semester of college, Emily, Nick, and Paul all stated they believed they had declined spiritually.

Yea, because of that freedom [of being in college] there are things I can do, but with spirituality and with my beliefs it's hard to like, go up or stay constant because you go low because some things are changing and my beliefs will change too.

Alternatively, Ella, Rebecca, and Timothy declared they had grown throughout their first college experience.

[My spiritual formation] has developed by going to college because I've been seeing psychologists [and] been talking to lots of professors and they've been pouring into my life in ways that I never thought I could be poured into.

Two of the individuals who stayed home for college and one individual who went away for college perceived a spiritual decline, and two of the individuals who went away for college and one who stayed home for college believed they had grown spiritually.

When assessing the five areas of spiritual growth recognized by Astin et al. (2010) (equanimity, ethic of caring, charitable involvement, ecumenical world view, and spiritual quest) for Nick and Paul, who believed they had declined spiritually, indicators suggested that there was either a stagnation or a decline in these areas. Yet, when Emily, who also believed that she had declined spiritually, assessed the five areas for herself, there were areas that showed decline or stagnation, but there were certain indicators that suggested she had actually grown spiritually. For example, in the pre-semester interview, Emily stated she had nothing to show for charitable involvement, but, when asked about charitable involvement in the post-semester interview, she mentioned how she had the opportunity to help her mom during the Thanksgiving break with Toys for Tots. In the pre-semester interview, she also addressed spiritual quest as something that she did not feel was too important, but in the post-semester interview, she spoke of new experiences that she explored during college, such as attending FCA meetings that actually gave her more of an appreciation of the spiritual quest and searching for meaning in life.

I feel like I used to question [my faith] a lot more, but now, I kind of just let things happen. And trust the process, like I said before. I kind of go with the flow, and I know that God has a plan, and everything happens for a reason. So, I

kind of just let things play out and I do as best I can... I definitely think that [my faith] is a lot of work, I can definitely improve on that... Yeah, but also this semester, there was this organization, I think... FCA! So, one of the girls on my [swimming] team is part of it, she's one of the leaders. So, I went to that a few times.

These new experiences are important to note because, during the pre-semester interview, she was the only participant who did not have a high number (between 8 and 10) on the Likert-scale question regarding spiritual quest, giving it a 5. Yet, after her first semester, she increased that number to 7. Paul also had new experiences during his semester of college, specifically meeting and discussing beliefs with fellow students who identified as Jehovah's Witnesses, but his response was similar to what he had stated were his reactions to different beliefs in the pre-semester interview, indicating a stagnation of spiritual growth.

For Ella, Rebecca, and Timothy, there were categories that could be viewed as spiritually stagnant, such as community involvement and spiritual quest. Each of these participants either had no community involvement during their semester or their community involvement remained the same throughout the semester. For spiritual quest, all three of these participants had already rated spiritual quest very high during the pre-semester interviews (either 9 or 10) and that trend continued during the post-semester interviews. Yet, in regard to equanimity, ethic of caring, and ecumenical world view, all three participants showed signs of spiritual growth in a variety of ways. Ella spoke of how the stress of being a college student forced her to be more reliant on strategies to deal with stress and difficult situations, such as prayer and Scripture (equanimity). Timothy mentioned how he has become more active and aware of people's needs, addressing them with psychological strategies and practices that he has learned while in college (ethic of

caring). Rebecca became more vocal in addressing concerns from those who have different religious beliefs, and she was also more confident in stating her personal beliefs as well (ecumenical world view).

For each of the participants who lived on campus for their first semester, there were indicators that some spiritual growth had occurred in a few of the categories. Emily was the only participant living on campus who stated that she did not feel like she had spiritually grown, even though she did not personally recognize her spiritual growth: “Well, I feel, like, my spiritual growth didn’t really... It didn’t really grow.” For two of the participants who stayed home for college, there was little to no indication of spiritual growth. However, Timothy did experience spiritual growth during his first semester of college. The evidence suggests that residence choices of Christian emerging adults who are in their first year of university have some influence on spiritual growth. Primarily, living on campus of a university can lead to an increase in spiritual growth. Although it is not impossible to experience spiritual growth while living at home during college, as shown through Timothy, evidence from this interview data suggested that stagnation can occur.

Themes and Relationships Central to Case Study

After carefully reviewing the data and analyzing for patterns within the participant responses, four significant themes emerged relevant to influences of residency choice and spiritual growth of Christian emerging adults who are starting their first year of college. Creswell (2013) explained themes in qualitative research as “broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (p. 186). All themes identified encompass direct statements, actions and observations of participants and illustrate naturalistic

generalizations with supporting evidence. Table 4 displays the overall themes that emerged from the analysis of evidence found in the data.

Table 8

Theme Descriptions

Theme	Description
1	Anticipation of spiritual growth
2	Intentional spiritual growth
3	Residential factors
4	Overall confidence

Theme 1: Anticipation of Spiritual Growth

All six participants expressed and provided evidence that they believed that they would experience spiritual growth throughout their college career. This theme expresses the initial optimism that each participant had going into college during the pre-semester interviews. All participants communicated excitement at how attending college would grow their spirituality and allow them a new level of self-discovery and independence. Even during the post-semester interviews, participants who did not feel as if they had any spiritual growth in their first semester expressed assurances that, as they continued their college career, their spiritual growth would eventually improve. Emily suggested her inability to focus on spiritual growth was due to her hectic schedule. Nick stated that in his second semester he would be able to adjust to his new schedule and prioritize spiritual growth practices. Paul wanted to establish his freedom from his parents and their demands and believed doing so would allow him to focus more on spiritual growth.

Participants who experienced spiritual growth during their first semester exhibited confidence that their spiritual growth would continue to increase. Ella looked forward to the challenges she would face in her second semester and how her experiences during her first semester helped her prepare for those challenges: “So, I feel like I got to grow in my purpose of realizing that this is something I truly love, so I’m gonna keep working at it so I think I’ve been more sure.” Rebecca demonstrated self-awareness by addressing the fact that she still had unanswered questions regarding faith and spiritual growth but intended to continue searching for answers. Timothy cited that he was looking forward to new experiences and discoveries that would lead to greater success in his own spiritual growth.

By searching [my spirituality], I try to do, like I said, volunteering and doing things outside my realm of my comfort zone to see if there’s something that I like and then pray about it to see if that’s what God’s leading me to [do]. And so, just lots of studying, lots of reading, lots of interacting with people and then, at the end of the day, praying and reading my Bible for discernment.

Whether participants assessed their spiritual growth as right on track or in need of a course correction, each of them exhibited confidence that spiritual growth would occur in the immediate future.

Theme 2: Intentional Spiritual Growth

The essence of this theme stemmed from the review of pre-semester interviews attitudes and commonalities between those attitudes and the post-interview results. During the pre-semester interviews, Ella, Rebecca, and Timothy all indicated that spiritual growth would be a focal point during their time at university. Ella referenced a recent event she had participated in

and how she wanted to continue to learn and grow from that experience when she left for college. Rebecca stated that she wanted to use the university experience to gain spiritual independence. Timothy stated that interactions he had with atheists led him to want to grow spiritually to address the questions the atheists brought up to him.

I try to understand [the atheists'] beliefs by questioning them and trying to see the world in their perspective. And I'm for religious diversity and trying to understand them and hopefully we can find some common ground so I can share the gospel.

During the post-semester interviews, each of these participants expressed how they had experienced spiritual growth in various ways, even if it was not in the ways they had expected to grow during the pre-semester interviews. During the pre-semester interviews, Emily, Nick, and Paul did not express or exhibit any evidence they had any intention of focusing on spiritual growth during college. These three participants reflected on their experience during the post-semester interviews and did not express confidence in their spiritual growth during their first semester of college. Evidence suggests that starting college with an intentional focus on spiritual growth can lead to practices that support spiritual growth.

Theme 3: Residential Factors

All participants shared their reasons for why they chose their housing choice for college. Emily explained how she received a scholarship, which included housing. Ella and Rebecca both wanted a traditional college experience, which led to them deciding to live on campus. Paul did not want to rush a major life decision without having confidence in his future, which led to him staying home for college. Nick and Timothy both cited finances as the reason why they chose to stay home for college. There was no instance where any of the participants ever

considered how their spiritual growth would be influenced by where they chose to live during college, even though each of the participants stated that spiritual growth was a priority in all of their lives. Primary considerations for residence choice seemed to be based on convenience and financial reasons, with spiritual growth not being a secondary or even tertiary concern. When it came to the assessment of the variables of residency choice and spiritual growth, participants exhibited residency choice as a variable which they controlled and spiritual growth as a variable that would be dependently influenced by their residency choice.

Theme 4: Overall Confidence

All participants reflected on their residency choice and spiritual growth and expressed confidence or uncertainty in these two factors after completing their first semester of college. This theme emerged as reflections were varied in one category, but consistent in the other. Throughout the post-semester interview, there were mixed results related to assessing the personal spiritual growth of each participant. Three of the participants expressed confidence in their spiritual growth, while the other three participants did not feel confident they had grown spiritually (even though evidence suggests that Emily did experience spiritual growth in a few of the categories). Even with the varied responses of spiritual growth, none of the participants conveyed any uncertainty when it came to their residency choice. Paul stated that he wanted his parents to recognize his newfound independence and freedom better, but there was not a sense of regret or uncertainty in his decision to stay home for college.

Living at home has been difficult because [with] me being in college, I feel like I can handle things on my own more, like my schedule and stuff like that; but my parents are still trying to force me to, like, do this or do that.

Timothy communicated that living at home limited his social experiences and the ability to interact with his peers, but he was confident in his decision and the reasons he determined to stay home for college.

Pros [of being a commuter] is that you have a home to be at [and] it's not going to cost you a lot of living expenses, but the downside is you're missing out in community because from what I see [at] my university, everyone has their own clique, everyone is hanging outside their residence dorm; they're doing all these sort of things... I just value more being out of debt. In my average four years, more important than having that community; because I have solid friends. I don't need more than them, but it'd be a little bit nicer to be able to be more engaged at the university.

Regardless of the outcome, all participants remained assured that the residency choice they had made was the right decision. For the participants who reviewed their spiritual growth as stagnant or declining, residency choice did not seem to be a contributing factor they considered.

Evidence of Quality

The topic of study was investigated by adhering to Zahle's (2019) method for conducting a case study. First, a case within a contemporary context to study was identified. After gathering data through interviews and observations over a period of time, significant statements were developed. These statements were grouped into codes based on their meaning. Next, the codes were reviewed to ensure "descriptive adequacy, reactivity transparency, and relevance" (p. 33). Codes were then combined into comprehensive categories. These categories were used to describe the essence of these experiences through detailed descriptions of the themes that

emerged from the data. Throughout the process, the researcher conferred with his dissertation committee and any errors addressed were rectified as recommended. Additionally, member checking was used by asking the participants to validate the credibility of the data collected.

Summary

The results presented in this chapter provided evidence of the influence residence choice has on the spiritual growth of Christian emerging adults who are first-year college students. The information obtained during the interview and observation process revealed the thought processes, strategic actions, lived experiences, and perceived changes of the participants during their first semester at university. All participants shared their perceptions of spiritual growth and determining factors of residence choices prior to and following their first semester at university and highlighted specific changes and transformations they experienced, which assisted in the analysis of the data. Chapter 5 provides discussion of the results of this case study, the limitations, implications for future practice, and recommendations for future research.

V. DISCUSSION

Introduction

Going to college has become somewhat of a rite of passage for emerging adults as they transition from adolescents guided and protected by their parents to contributing individual members of society. These transformative years can lead to changes in social, emotional, mental, and spiritual development. Throughout this time, a variety of variables, such as relationships, socioeconomic status, level of success, and housing choice have influenced changes in college students' development. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how housing choices of emerging adult Christians who are starting college can influence their spiritual growth. Six Christian, emerging adults attending college participated in this study. Two research questions and one research sub-question guided this study and focused on the spiritual growth, lived experiences, and residency choices of Christian emerging adults who had started college and who subsequently completed their first semester of college. Discussion in this section includes the interpretation of the results, implications for future practice, and recommendations for future research.

Methods of Data Collection

In a case study investigation, researchers conduct interviews and observe participants to collect data (Zahle, 2019). The methodology followed in this study adhered to the case study research method described by Creswell (2013). Furthermore, literature from Zahle (2019) and Saldaña (2016) provided supplemental support on how to best conduct and ethical qualitative research study. For this study, a survey (Appendix B) was administered to gather a sample of convenience, and the same interview protocol (Appendix F) was used with each participant.

Interviews were conducted prior to the beginning of the first college semester of each participant and again following the completion of the participants' first semester of college. The interview guide consisted of six open-ended questions along with six Likert-scale questions, as well as a reflective seventh open-ended question that was only asked during the interviews that were conducted after the completion of the participants' first semester of college. Following the live interviews, the audio files of each interview were transcribed and stored as Microsoft Word documents. The participants received electronic copies of their corresponding transcripts and validated the responses. All physical copies of transcripts, consent forms, and anecdotal records were stored in a locked filing cabinet. All electronic copies of transcripts, audio files, and anecdotal records were saved on a password protected laptop computer and on a USB flash drive that was also stored in a locked filing cabinet. These documents will be kept for five years, and at the end of the five-year period, all documents associated with this study will be permanently destroyed. Chapter 3 provided an in-depth description of the procedures used for this study.

Interpretation of the Findings

In this qualitative case study, the researcher examined the lived experiences, perceptions and self-evaluations of six Christian, emerging adults before and after the completion of their first semester of college. Erikson's (1980) stages of psychosocial development and Fowler's (1981) stages of faith provided a theoretical framework for this study. As discussed in Chapter 2, emerging adulthood is a phase of life identified as intimacy vs. isolation during which individuals begin the search for belonging in the world around them (Knight, 2017). Additionally, the emerging adult phase of life is also a time when individuals focus on faith development and begin to shape their faith to be more individualistic; they are more reflective on their faith development than in previous phases of life (Arnett, 2000). All six participants

experienced transformations through self-discovery of their personal lives and challenges of their faith, which were exhibited through changes and observations noticed in their faith-based practices and personal assessments. Evidence from observations and participants' responses suggested psychosocial development and faith development transitioned into the appropriate phase of life identified by both Erikson (1980) and Fowler (1981). A summary of the results and their connection to the research questions, as described in Chapter 4, and a discussion of the results in relationship to the literature is provided in this chapter. The interpretations and conclusions drawn are representative of the data collected and not meant to generalize the lived experiences to all Christian, emerging adults who are starting college.

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of first year Christian, emerging adults' spiritual growth since their arrival at university?

The perceptions of first year Christian, emerging adults' spiritual growth during their first semester of college vary from one another. The study revealed that spiritual growth can increase, become stagnant, or even decrease when an emerging adult begins to attend college. All participants graduated from the same Christian academy prior to starting college, and all expressed some level of confidence in their spiritual growth during the pre-semester interviews. When assessing their personal spiritual growth, every participant was able to identify factors that contributed to their spiritual growth, stagnation, or decline.

Emily attributed her perception of spiritual stagnation to a hectic lifestyle caused by an intensive class schedule and demanding training as a member of her university's swimming team. Ella stated that her spiritual growth received a significant boost as she was challenged by the level of talent and commitment of her peers and her ability to become more organized in her

personal schedule and surroundings. “I felt challenged, because I felt like, the people coming in... Like, you know, it was just, it was very, like, I start to compare myself in certain things and I feel like God was really pushing me.” Timothy attributed his increased spiritual growth to the relationships that he built with professors and mentors that he met while in college. Paul stated his spiritual growth seemed stagnant because of the limitations he felt from his parents that restricted his ability to fully realize the individualized phase of faith development that Fowler (1981) posited normally occurs in this phase of life. Contrary to Paul, Rebecca experienced more of a focus on individualized faith development, stating that she specifically wanted to establish her faith and not rely on the faith of her parents. Nick remarked that certain practices that lead to faith development, such as attending worship services, were encumbered not only by the demands of his new college schedule, but also the demands of his family life and schedule. “Ok, so I’m spiritually... or just during the semester... [My family] didn’t start, like I said, we didn’t go to church a lot, so it was a different conversation [than before college].” All participants experienced perceived changes to their spiritual growth and practices that affected spiritual growth when they started attending college. Perceived changes were both positive and negative.

Sub – Question to Research Question 1: How do the experiences at university influence the spiritual growth of Christian, emerging adults who are first-year college students?

According to Fowler (1981), emerging adults who start college are transitioning into stage four of faith development, known as individuated/reflective faith.

Where genuine movement toward stage 4 is underway the person must face certain unavoidable tensions: individuality versus being defined by a group or group membership; subjectivity and the power of one's strongly felt but unexamined feelings versus objectivity and the requirement of critical reflection; self-fulfillment or self-actualization as a primary concern versus service to and being for others; the question of being committed to the relative versus struggle with the possibility of an absolute. (Fowler, 1981, p. 182)

Throughout the interviews and observations of all six participants, there was evidence to suggest that every participant experienced, during their first semester of college, the unavoidable tensions outlined by Fowler. Emily expressed how strongly she felt about community service and took the time to emphasize that the motive for serving others is just as important as the act of serving others. During her pre-semester interview, Emily was strongly opposed to individuals who only did community service to attain the amount of community service hours required by the Christian academy she graduated from.

I think it's really important to do [community service]. Like, if you have the time and you really want to do it. Like, I don't support people who do it just for community service or like... I absolutely hate that because I feel like it's forced and it's like, you're just doing it to graduate.

Yet, this feeling seemed to be reiterated as she explained an opportunity she had during the Thanksgiving break to donate to Toys for Tots with her mom, and she was asked about how important she believed it was to do community service.

Yeah, [community service is important]. If.... As long as it's genuine. Like you are volunteering to actually volunteer, like not... You're not doing it for the hours or for, you like, [get] something out of it. Then I think it's really important.

As Emily began the transition from high school to college, she also continued to make the distinction of intention. Doing the right thing was no longer motivated by fulfilling a requirement made by a governing organization but had to be done for the right reasons with the right cause in mind. In the pre-semester interview, even though she rated community service as very important, Emily did not have any specific community service activities that she felt strongly enough about to mention. Yet, in the post-semester interview, Emily spoke about her involvement with Toys for Tots with a sense of pride.

Yeah, I went shopping with my mom, and she was buying a bunch of toys that were, like, for Toys for Tots. And, I don't know. It just makes me think about all of the kids who are not as fortunate. And, I don't know, it just... I was like, all little things like that, and getting them something that isn't like... I mean to us, if someone is more fortunate, that's just a toy car, but, like, to them, who doesn't have anything, that's a huge thing. Those little things, I think... If I could be part of something like that; oh my gosh! That would be amazing, but I don't really have time.

While time commitments did limit her ability to serve, Emily made it clear that the community service she now took part in gave her more excitement because she could now invest time and energy in an area where she was truly interested and not just go with whatever activity allowed her to complete her mandated community service hours.

Ella experienced a similar transition toward individuality when it came to being able to be more organized and also in her spiritual growth that manifested in a more confident belief in her faith, which is expressed by her belief that her spiritual formation became more “honed in[sic]” since attending university.

My spiritual formation, at this point in my life, has definitely been more honed in[sic], in my experience, going to college. I’ve been able to just be on my own more, and I think I haven’t been... I haven’t been able to be more influenced by all the noise.

Of all of the participants, Ella seemed the most confident in each area of her spiritual growth, scoring all five categories (equanimity, ethic of caring, charitable involvement, ecumenical world view, and spiritual quest) ranged from 8 to 10 on the Likert-scale questions. Ella seemed uncertain only of her growth in areas that she did not want to come across as being arrogant, and her lower scores had nothing to do with doubt of her personal assessment of spiritual growth.

[I’m unsure] just because, it’s like, I just feel like it’s a question. I’m always like, that was... I don’t want to be caught cocky, or I don’t know how exact because I feel like [category score] is more of other people to say.

Although Ella seemed most confident, Rebecca gave the impression of being the most intentional about the individuative/reflective stage of faith (Fowler, 1981). During the pre-semester interview, Rebecca mentioned a few times that she wanted to use this time at college to really focus on her personal level of faith.

So, I think that’s something I’m trying to focus on while I leave and go to college and everything because I want to grow more because I do realize there are a lot of

times that I don't focus on [my faith] as much, and I want to put more focus on myself than my faith. And, I want to make that change, and I want to... umm... kind of focus more on my growth, my spirituality, as I go to college, which is kind of opposite of a lot of college kids, I think.

During the post-semester interview, Rebecca revealed practical steps she had taken in order to accomplish the goal of focusing on her spiritual growth. The steps she took included attending church services of different denominations, searching out friends with similar religious beliefs, and avoiding situations that she believed compromised her personal values. All these practices led to a perceived increase in spiritual growth between Rebecca's pre- and post-semester interviews.

In his pre-semester interview, Timothy expressed hopes that his college experience would help him continue a process of spiritual reformation that had begun when he was in high school.

Throughout high school, I had to do a lot of reformation from my past from the churches that I went to and stuff like that. And, luckily, through the mentors that I have and hopefully the new mentors that will mentor me, I can be stronger in my faith.

Similar to Rebecca, Timothy's intentional attitude seemed to have yielded positive results as he expressed spiritual growth during his first semester and specifically because of developing relationships with his college professors and new mentors in college.

Paul's new spiritual growth experiences during his first semester in college seemed to be limited to encountering individuals who held different spiritual beliefs than

the spiritual beliefs he held; specifically, a pair of people who associated with the religious organization, Jehovah's Witnesses. Although this interaction was notable for Paul, it did not lead to any critical reflection that can be attributed with his current stage of faith (Fowler, 1981). Paul stated during his post-semester that he was being challenged when it came to the new found freedom he had attained as a college student.

Yeah, the teachers [in high school covered me], but now I'm in college, [so] everything's on my own, [and everyone's] so hard on me, and like... It's just, there's a lot more freedom now. So, it's, like, really something difficult to deal with you know as a man, so yeah, absolutely, having freedom to do things and just, that's very difficult to feel like, 'Ok, what type of freedom should I be involved in?' You know? Those are the type of things that are just different now than from high school.

Nick did not seem to experience as many changes, challenges, and transformations to his faith as the other participants, and did not cite or address any specific areas that he felt significant growth in. When comparing Nick's responses from the pre-semester interview and the post-semester interview, his responses remained very consistent in both instances with the exception being his degree of community involvement. During the pre-semester interview, Nick mentioned that he served his church's homeless ministry on a weekly basis, but during the post-semester interview, Nick stated that he was not involved in any community service at the time and attributed his college schedule as having some impact on his inability to do community service.

When reviewing interview and observational data, evidence shows all six participants' spiritual growth was influenced in some way by their residency status. Whether it was Emily's affirmation of intention being an important part of action, Ella's more "honed in" approach to faith, Rebecca's practical applications of becoming more spiritually focused, Timothy's relationships with certain professors, Paul's newfound freedom and new decisions that come along with that freedom, or Nick's inability to continue to serve the community in the same capacity that he had in the past, each participant was able to attribute some aspect of their spiritual growth to their experiences while at university. The university experiences seemed to have an overwhelmingly positive influence with five out of the six participants having experiences that adhered to Fowler's (1981) suggested movement necessary in stage 4 of his stages of faith; movements that allowed participants to enact a "double development" (p. 182). This two-fold development is described as "self (identity) and outlook (world view)" (Fowler, 1981, p. 182). Five of the six participants' data suggested their experiences helped influence and develop at least one of these two areas, with Nick being the only individual that did not have any evidence to support these areas being developed during his first semester at college.

Research Question 2: How do the residency choices of Christian, emerging adults who are first-year college students influence their spiritual growth during their first year of college or university?

When reviewing the data to understand how residency choices influences the spiritual growth of the participants, there are the two distinct groups identified, participants who chose to stay home for college and participants who chose to live on-campus for college. Paul, Nick, and

Timothy all chose to stay home for college, while Emily, Ella, and Rebecca all lived on-campus during their first semester of college.

All three of the participants who lived on-campus each experienced indicators of spiritual growth throughout their first semester in at least three of the five measures of spiritual growth (i.e., equanimity, ethic of caring, charitable involvement, ecumenical world view, spiritual quest) as outlined by Astin et al. (2010). Yet, both Ella and Rebecca experienced a decline in the category of charitable involvement as neither one of them were involved in community service in any capacity during their first semester at university, even though both of them still rated charitable involvement as important when asked to rate it on a Likert scale. Also, when Emily was asked about her perception of spiritual growth, she did not feel as if she had grown very much while attending college, even though a comparison of her pre-semester interview and post-semester interview suggests that she experienced growth in charitable involvement, ecumenical worldview, and spiritual quest during her semester at college. “Well, I feel like before [college], I was higher. I was more, like, [spiritual]... Yeah, so I guess [that] was kind of [spiritual] improvement because I didn’t have that over summer.”

For the three participants who stayed home for college, the data indicate that although Timothy experienced spiritual growth in a couple of the categories, Paul and Nick seemed to have become stagnant or declined in all five areas of spiritual growth. Timothy showed indications of spiritual growth in areas such as equanimity, ecumenical worldview, and spiritual quest during his semester of college, while his charitable involvement remained constant throughout the semester. “[It’s] just my university has opened my eyes up more and helped me be more accepting.” When the data was reviewed, Nick’s spiritual development seems to have declined with indications of decline in areas of ethic of caring, charitable involvement,

ecumenical worldview, and spiritual quest. “Maybe because I don’t find opportunity present, because even though there are a lot [of opportunities], but like, I just don’t find them.” Paul also experienced similar declines in ethic of caring and ecumenical worldview along with the other three categories (i.e., equanimity, charitable involvement, and spiritual quest) seeming to be stagnant. “I feel like I could dig deeper and like figure out the things that are going on around me instead of waiting for someone to come to me.”

When all of the data is reviewed, there is evidence that suggests that residency choices of Christian, emerging adults who are starting college does influence their spiritual growth. The evidence supports the idea that living on-campus for college can have a positive influence, while staying at home for college can have a negative influence on spiritual growth. These two types of residency choices are not exclusive indicators of positive spiritual growth or negative spiritual decline, as exhibited by Timothy who stayed home for college but still experienced positive spiritual growth. Yet, a distinction of residency choice is demonstrated by Emily’s spiritual growth that occurred even though, based on her perception, she was unaware of her own spiritual growth. Although residency choice may not be the only influencer of spiritual growth, evidence supports the idea that residency choice can have some influence on spiritual growth of a Christian, emerging adult who is starting college.

The Findings Related to the Literature

For this research case study, four themes emerged which distinguished the spiritual growth experiences and residency choices of each of the six participants. The identified themes were (1) Anticipation of spiritual growth, (2) Intentional spiritual growth, (3) Residential factors, and (4) Overall confidence. These themes encompassed the experiences and perceptions of

participants as they completed their first semester of college. Through reviewing the data provided by pre- and post-semester interviews, themes provided a vivid depiction of the differences each participant experienced throughout their semester at university. In Chapter 4, the themes were supported with actual statements from the participants. The following discussion aligns the meanings of each theme that was revealed from the lived experiences of each participant.

Theme 1: Anticipation of spiritual growth

Cherry, DeBerg, and Porterfield (2001) conducted an ethnographic study of campus religious life and stated, “It is possible that young people in American culture have never been more enthusiastically engaged in religious practice or with religious ideas” (p. 294 – 295). This statement seems to have been reflected in the attitudes of all of the participant in this case study. At some point during each individual’s interview, there was an assurance that spiritual growth would occur for each participant. For some participants, this anticipation was stated during the pre-semester interviews. Rebecca expressed her anticipation as the desire to develop an independent faith that was not reliant on her parents’ religious practices. Ella’s anticipation was demonstrated by her desire to continue growing her faith and seeking out her purpose in life. Timothy believed that his faith would increase as he built new mentoring relationships while in college. Even though Paul, Emily and Nick did not have any evidence of anticipation for spiritual growth during the pre-semester interviews and did not feel like they had any spiritual growth during their first semester of college, all three of them expressed optimism that they would grow spiritually during the next semester.

Yeah, I've noticed, I think, like, going into the spring semester, I can definitely focus on [spiritual growth] now. Like, knowing how to handle everything that's going on to start making time; to go to church, just to [take] five minutes out of my day to pray; things like that.

Regardless of perception or end result of spiritual growth, each participant exhibited some form of confidence that spiritual growth would increase in the future. There was a personal assurance for each of them that no matter previous results, this was a stage in life where spiritual growth would be transformational.

Theme 2: Intentional spiritual growth

Evidence from the pre-semester and post-semester interviews suggest that participants who were intentional about experiencing spiritual growth were more likely to actually experience spiritual growth. All three participants; Ella, Rebecca, and Timothy, who clearly stated that they perceived spiritual growth during their first semester of college, also stated during the pre-semester interviews that they were focused on developing some specific aspect of their spiritual growth. Yet, the three other participants; Emily, Nick, and Paul, did not explicitly express any area where they desired spiritual growth during the pre-semester interviews and during the post-semester interviews, they all had a harder time identifying indications of spiritual growth. Love (2001) summarized the major change that occurs in this transition between the two stages of faith identified by Fowler (1981) from adolescence to emerging adulthood.

In the synthetic/conventional stage, an individual is developing an integrated identity, but it is based on tacit elements of the culture in which an individual is

embedded. There is then a leap to the individuated/reflective stage, where one becomes able to critically choose one's beliefs, values, and commitments (Love, 2001, p. 12).

Evidence from this case study suggests that individuals who are focused on spiritual growth when the transition from the synthetic/conventional stage to the individuated/reflective stage occurs will be more likely to experience and perceive significant spiritual growth as they develop their own personal beliefs, values and commitments. So even though the individuated/reflective stage is about developing independent of one's surroundings and previous conventions, influential sources during an adolescent's synthetic/conventional stage of development can instigate spiritual growth during emerging adulthood by simply placing emphasis on prioritizing spiritual growth as an individual. Therefore, it is not only important for external influences to provide information to help develop spiritual growth during the synthetic/conventional stage, but also promote a desire of self-discovery regarding spiritual growth.

Theme 3: Residential factors

Hartley (2004) stated that college is an experience when emerging adults generally experience a spiritual decline and a transformation to more secular and liberal views.

Studies revealed that college in general has a liberalizing effect on students' values and attitudes. Religious views became more individual and less dogmatic, and the tolerance for the religious beliefs of others increased as a result of attending college (Hartley, 2004, p. 114).

Yet, in this case study, evidence shows that while emerging adults in college do indeed emphasize individual faith and religious views, this does not necessarily mean that

emerging adults become more liberal in their religious beliefs and neglect practices that promote spiritual growth. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) posited that students who lived at home had less of a spiritual decline than students who moved away for college, but the results of this case study suggest the opposite conclusion.

When the evidence was reviewed, it was discovered that individuals who went away for college actually had their religious views reinforced when they encountered other belief systems. Ella stated that she felt challenged in her personal faith by those around her; Emily found herself committed to be more dedicated to spiritual practices after her first semester; and Rebecca decided to search for friends that shared the same religious values that she held.

And now, I'm trying to become friends with more people in the campus ministries, because a friend group I'm in right now isn't in any of them. So, it's a little tough because they don't really share [religious views] with me, I guess.

The evidence from the emerging adults who stayed home suggests that staying home can actually lead to lethargy of spiritual practices and a decline in interest of spiritual growth. As a matter of fact, the only individual who perceived spiritual growth while living at home was Timothy, who cited that exploring new experiences and relationships was a primary reason that he grew spiritually during his first semester.

Yea, my mentors in college [who have poured into me], like my professors. I've made our relationships shift outside the classroom, and my psychologist professor, he's been helping me out a lot and stuff. So, he's been pouring into me and encouraging me to pray more.

Therefore, evidence supports the idea that environments which cultivate an attitude of exploration and create opportunities for emerging adults to engage in new spiritual practices can actually have a positive influence on spiritual growth. When assessing both Paul's post-semester interview and Nick's post-semester interview, it is clear that staying home did not allow them to experience too many new spiritual encounters, with the exception of Paul's encounter with members of the Jehovah's Witness organization. This approach to keep the status quo seems to have led to a spiritual decline or spiritual stagnation for both Paul and Nick, who stayed home during their first semester of college.

Theme 4: Overall Confidence

Knight (2017) associated Erikson's (1980) sixth stage of psychosocial development, intimacy vs. isolation, with the stage of psychodynamic psychotherapy, "The Search for Mutual Loving: Balancing the poles of Connectivity vs Segregation" (p. 1051). "This stage of therapy raises issues of connection versus withdrawal, of the pull-push tendency of relating, and thus the opposing tendency of isolation, all the while encompassing a search for mutual love" (p. 1053). All of the participants experienced this tug-of-war between relationship and isolation, and expressed confidence that spiritual growth would occur, regardless of the outcome at the conclusion of their first semester of college.

Emily emphasized the ability to adjust now that she had found balance in handling her busy schoolwork and sports schedule. Ella expressed that she enjoyed the freedom of not being influenced by outside sources as much as she had been during her time in high school. Rebecca explained that she was taking steps to build relationships

with individuals who shared similar religious values. Even though Timothy stated that he did feel less socially connected than his peers who lived on-campus, he was still confident that he had made the right decision to stay home for college. Nick did not feel any significant spiritual growth, but he did recognize that he was beginning new spiritual practices to grow spiritually, specifically attending the “young adult” services at his church. Paul found himself focusing on himself and his newfound freedom and how increased independence affected him.

Every participant exhibited signs that they were experiencing some form of balance between the poles of segregation and connectivity (Knight, 2017) or isolation and intimacy (Erikson, 1980). Ella, Nick, and Paul all searched out ways to be fulfilled with new experiences that emphasized isolation and self-satisfaction; while Emily, Rebecca, and Timothy all emphasized their exploration of intimacy and relationships. This evidence suggests confidence that all the participants’ current stage of psychosocial development is appropriate for their current phase of life. Also, during each post-semester interview, there was a sense of optimism from every participant that he or she would eventually adjust and find the balance between segregation and connectivity, which would lead to a healthy personal development, including spiritual growth.

Limitations

This study provided analyses and interpretations based on a small sample of Christian emerging adults who were in their first year of college who graduated from a Christian academy in Florida. Data collection and analysis were limited to the responses provided by six college students who participated in this study. This research case study did not reflect the experiences

of other Christian emerging adults attending college who did not graduate from a Christian academy or did not attend universities outside of the state of Florida. Furthermore, there were no interviews with other sources of spiritual growth influence for the participants, such as parents, teachers, pastors, or mentors, who could have all had insight into the spiritual growth of the participants during their first semester of college. The primary source of data for this study came from the participants' responses during interview sessions and no other source, such as a focus group interview sessions or field observations.

The participants were selected in a sample of convenience based on individuals voluntarily completed the initial survey and were willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview. In that sample of convenience, three of the participants were male and the other three participants were female. The male participants were the three participants who also stayed home for college, while the female participants were the three participants who lived on-campus for college. While this could have some influence on the results of the study, there is no evidence from the study or literature review that this distinction caused a significant skew in the case study's results.

Within the sample of convenience, the participants also attended different types of universities. Two participants attended different public universities (Emily and Rebecca), two participants attended different private Christian universities (Ella and Timothy), and two other participants attended the same community college (Nick and Paul). With the variation of schools, there could have been a disproportionate number of resources and organizations available to participants that helped support their spiritual growth. While the additional resources available to participants who attended private Christian universities could be viewed as a variable that skewed the results of the study, there is research which suggests that students who

chose private Christian universities did so because they already had an increased interest in spiritual growth. The university choices of those students may have been an effect of intentional spiritual growth and not the cause of it (Otto & Harrington, 2016; Hall & Edwards, 2016; Bailey, Jones, Hall, Wang, and McMartin, 2016).

Zahle (2019) warned that a researcher should try to influence the lives of participants of a case study as little as possible. This was ensured by only interacting with participants before and after the period of time of the study, their first semester of college, and allowing them to reflect on their independent experiences that were not interfered with in any way. Additionally, member checking, code clusters, categories, and conferences with a dissertation committee were all used to ensure trustworthiness and credibility (Creswell, 2013).

Implications for Future Practice

Otto and Harrington (2016) posited that commitment to spiritual formation should be engaged holistically. While Otto and Harrington's study specifically addresses Christian colleges and universities, there are emerging adults that identify as Christian who do not decide to attend Christian colleges and universities and should still enact the same holistic approach suggested. The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of Christians who are first-year college students' residency decisions (living at home or living on campus) and their spiritual growth during their first year in college. As society in the United States continues to increase the emphasis of attending college, it is important to assess how the college experience affects every aspect of those who attend, including spiritual growth, and the factors that influence these aspects.

As a college education continues to become more and more of a necessity, considerations regarding how college campuses can help cultivate an atmosphere of spiritual growth may be helpful. Perhaps introducing spiritually based programs and organizations to incoming students during new student orientations may provide students searching for opportunities of spiritual growth better prospects to follow up with when they begin college. Parents could encourage their child who is staying at home for college to explore new spiritually based organizations now open to them, provided by their university or church, such as a campus ministry or a young adults' group. Fowler (1981) stated that in order "for a genuine move to Stage 4 [individuated/reflexive faith] to occur there must be an interruption of reliance on external sources of authority" (p. 179). As is the case of the six participants of this study, the two individuals who still felt dependent on the spiritual practices of their parents (Paul and Nick) experienced the least amount of spiritual growth and experienced what could only be described as overall spiritual stagnation or spiritual decline. In order for parents to cultivate the best atmosphere for their Christian emerging adult to spiritually grow during college, they must create an environment where college students feel freedom in their own spiritual growth decisions and allow these decisions to play out even if they disagree with the direction that their child is going. Some actions may include encouraging exploration of different churches and ministries, not forcing Christian emerging adults to adhere strictly to the same religious practices required prior to starting college, and initiating conversations that challenge emerging adults' faith and forces them to begin to seek out answers to questions they may have not considered before.

Recommendations for Future Research

In this study, the residency status and spiritual growth of six Christian emerging adults attending their first semester of college were studied. Further examination of this topic may

investigate other influential individuals who impact the decisions and development of Christian emerging adults. The accounts of individuals who influence the lives of emerging adult Christians attending college, such as parents, teachers, professors, and mentors, and their perceptions of the significance of spiritual growth may be worthy of investigation. Turley (2006) addressed parental concerns regarding the residency choice of emerging adults, but there is no mention of spiritual growth being a priority among the concerns mentioned in her study. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) do address residential status influences on spirituality, but their initial study was conducted in 1995, over two decades ago. The extended period of time from this study and immense change of postsecondary education and society's views on education and religion as a whole make this an area worth reviewing again. Hartley (2004) suggested that implications of research regarding religious activities should be considered by student affairs professionals (p. 125), which could lead to further research about how these professionals could influence spiritual growth of both students who live on-campus and students who commute from home. These categories are still open to exploration and provide opportunities for additional research. A phenomenological study could be a useful methodology to conduct future studies regarding influences housing choices have on spiritual growth throughout an emerging adult Christian's college tenure. Future research could employ a quantitative method approach to examine spiritual growth and how it is influenced by residential choice of Christian emerging adults attending college, by using an appropriate metric. There are a variety of possible research questions to be addressed regarding this topic.

Summary

Spiritual growth is cultivated on a college campus through two approaches: academically by incorporating spiritual growth and evaluation in the classroom and socially by incorporating

spiritual growth in the residential life experience of students (Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, 2011). While attempts are made to integrate spiritual formation and spiritual growth conversations into the classroom in both Christian and secular universities, with varying degrees of effectiveness; integration of spiritual growth seems to be becoming more prevalent in the residential life of students who live on-campus. Allowing students freedom to explore their faith among those with differing views, giving them the ability to challenge their faith independently, and allowing them the opportunity to find new religious experiences on a college campus are a few practices that could help influence positive spiritual growth of Christian emerging adults. This study added to the existing body of research regarding spiritual growth of Christian college students. Evidence presented in this study suggests that living on-campus during college had a positive influence on the spiritual growth of Christian emerging adults, while staying home and commuting to college could have a negative influence on the spiritual growth of Christian emerging adults.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Informed consent email for survey

Hello,

My name is Darred Williams and I am asking for your help in completing a brief survey.

This survey is designed to gather information for a research study conducted by myself, Darred Williams, as a part of my Ed.D. Doctoral Dissertation. The purpose of this research study is to explore the relationship between first-year Christian college students' residency decisions and their spiritual growth during their first year of college. The principal investigator is Dr. Meghan Musy, Professor at Southeastern University. This research survey has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of Southeastern University (IRB@seu.edu).

All responses are anonymous and confidential. Results of the survey are based on aggregated data and contact information is requested and will only be used if an individual meets the requirements to further participate in the study. The survey is only 10 questions and should not take you more than 5 minutes to complete.

By taking this survey, you certify that you are 18 years of age or older and that you consent to participate and are willing to be followed up with, if you meet the recommended requirements of the researcher. If you have any questions related to this survey, please feel free to contact me at (386) 801-3658 or dkwilliams@seu.edu. You may also contact Dr. Musy by email at mdmusy@seu.edu or the IRB Committee at IRB@seu.edu.

In order to take the survey, please click the following link:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GD589ST>

Thank you for your help and participation in completing this survey,

Darred King Williams

Appendix B

First-Year College Experience Survey

Please answer the following questions by choosing the appropriate response to each question

Gender: Male Female

Age: 17 years 18-21 years

Which type of university/college are you currently attending?

Public University Private University Community College

Please provide the name of the university you attend:

Which of the following statements best fits your current residence status in college?

Living at home

Living off-campus not at home

Living on-campus

During your high school tenure, did you participate in any advanced placement classes that required you to attend classes at a college or university?

Yes No

Do you identify as a Christian?

Yes No

Do either one of your parents identify as a confessing Christian?

Yes No

What church do you attend?

Church name

City/State

If you are willing to be interviewed based on your responses, please leave your email address below:

Appendix C

Email invitation to participants

Hello!

You are receiving this email because after completing a survey regarding your residency status during your first year of college and your perceived spirituality, you indicated that you would be interested in a possible follow-up interview.

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between first-year Christian college students' residency decisions (staying home or going away) and their spiritual growth during their first year of college and the interview questions will reflect this topic.

You have been selected for a follow up interview with the student investigator, Darred Williams. If you should so choose to be a part of this research study by being interviewed, the interview can be conducted in person, via Skype, Facetime, or telephone. The interview will be audio recorded and I will be taking notes. Any information that can specifically identify you will be kept confidential. I will use a pseudonym or code in place of your real name when I compile, analyze, and report the results of your interview.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You should decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be destroyed.

If you have questions about this study, first contact the doctoral student investigator, Mr. Darred Williams at dkwilliams@seu.edu.

If you have further questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact Dr. Meghan Musy, the Responsible Principal Investigator, at (863) 667-5097 or via email at mdmusy@seu.edu.

If you are willing to be interviewed, please respond to this email as soon as possible to Darred Williams at dkwilliams@seu.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I hope to hear back from you soon!

Darred King Williams

Appendix D

Informed Consent Form

TITLE OF STUDY

A Study of Spiritual Growth and Housing Choices Among First-Year College Students

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Meghan Musy
Southeastern University
1000 Longfellow Boulevard
Lakeland, FL 33801
mdmusy@seu.edu

STUDENT INVESTIGATOR

Darred K. Williams

dkwilliams@seu.edu

PURPOSE OF STUDY

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between first-year Christian college students' residency decisions (staying home or going away) and their spiritual growth during their first year of college.

STUDY PROCEDURES

Once you give consent to participating in this study, I will contact you to schedule an interview. The interview may be conducted in person, via Skype, Facetime, or telephone. The interview will be audio recorded and I will be taking notes. Any information that can specifically identify you will be kept confidential. I will use a pseudonym or code in place of your real name when I compile, analyze, and report the results of your interview. The purpose of the audio recording is to get an accurate account of our conversation for developing a transcript. This information will be kept in a secure area to which only I have access.

The following is the average amount of time that you will dedicate to this research process:

Initial Survey Form – 3-5 minutes

Interview – 30 minutes

RISKS

Because of the sensitive nature of this study, you may experience discomfort, anxiety and/or distress. You may also experience inconvenience, as your participation will require approximately fifteen minutes to complete the initial survey and approximately an hour to complete the interview.

You may decline to answer any or all questions and you may terminate your involvement at any time if you choose.

BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to you for your participation in this study. However, I hope that the information obtained from this study may add to the body of knowledge about spiritual growth in higher education.

CONFIDENTIALITY

For the purposes of this research study, your comments will be anonymous. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

- Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all research notes, analyses, reports, and documents.
- Keeping notes, interview transcriptions, and any other identifying participant information in a locked file cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher.

Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents. These incidents include, but may not be limited to, incidents of abuse and/or suicide risk.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions about this study, first contact the doctoral student investigator, Mr. Darred Williams at dkwilliams@seu.edu. If you are willing to participate in the study, please return this signed document to Mr. Williams at dkwilliams@seu.edu. You will be contacted by Mr. Williams to arrange a date and time for interviews.

If you have further questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact Dr. Meghan Musy, the Responsible Principal Investigator, at (863) 667-5097 or via email at mdmusy@seu.edu.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You should decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form.

I certify that I am at 18 years of age or older and voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Print Name _____

Sign _____ Date _____

Appendix E

Southeastern University IRB Approval

Southeastern University IRB Reviewer's Review Sheet

Protocol #: 2019 ED 22

Exempt: Yes ☒ No ☐

Principal Investigator's Name: Meghan Musy

Today's Date: 3 June 2019

Co-Investigators: Janet Dark Darrell Williams

Project Title: Study of Spiritual Growth and Residency for First Year College Students

1. Does the research place subjects at more than minimal risk?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Minimal risk is defined as the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort is no greater than that ordinarily encountered in daily life or during routine physical or psychological examination or tests)

Notes: _____

2. If more than minimal risk, does the merit of the project outweigh the risks and are the benefits maximized and risks minimized?

N/A ☐

Yes ☐

No ☐

Notes: _____

3. Are there any ethical issues regarding the study's design and conduct?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Ethical issues may include but are not limited to the Belmont Report principles: respect for persons (voluntary, fully informed consent); beneficence (obligation to protect subjects from harm and secure their well-being); and, justice (benefits and burdens of research are fairly distributed)

Notes: _____

4. Is subject selection equitable?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If special populations are included the IRB should ensure that subjects can understand the research, give full consent, and voluntarily agree to participate, and they should consider any other possible special problems.

Are vulnerable or special populations included in the research?

- ☐ Pregnant women
- ☐ Fetus/fetal tissue
- ☐ Prisoners
- ☐ Minors Under Age 18
- ☐ Elderly subjects
- ☐ Minority groups and non-English speakers
- ☐ Patients
- ☐ Mentally/Emotionally/Developmentally Disabled persons
- ☐ Behavioral Abnormalities, psychological or disease condition
- ☐ None of the above, Normal Healthy Volunteers

Notes: _____

5. Is the recruitment and consent process (including telephone scripts, ads, brochures, letters, compensation) fully described, appropriate, and non-coercive?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Notes: _____

No ☐No ☐No ☐No ☐No ☐No ☐No ☐No ☐No ☐No ☐No ☐No ☐No ☐No ☐No ☐No ☐

Not Required ☐

No ☐No ☐

No ☐

Date: 6-3-2019

Appendix F

Spirituality Interview Questions

1. “Spiritual formation is an intentional, multifaceted process which promotes transformation by which Christ is formed in us, so that we can become His continually maturing disciples” (Dettoni, 1994, p. 16) How would you describe your spiritual formation at this moment of your life?
2. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your current level of faith?
3. How do you remain composed or collect yourself during stressful times or in difficult situations?
4. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your ability to deal with difficult circumstances of your life?
5. How do you personally engage social injustice or help people in your life when they experience stress, pain, or suffering?
6. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate yourself on how much you help reduce pain and suffering in the world?
7. What types of community service and volunteer work are you currently involved in?
8. On a scale of 1-10, how important would you rank it is to do volunteer work?
9. How do you view and interact with other people who have different religious beliefs and cultures?
10. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rank your acceptance of people who have different beliefs than you?
11. How do you currently search for meaning and purpose in your life?
12. On a scale of 1-10, how important is it to you to search for meaning and purpose in life?
13. Do you have anything else you would like to share about your first year of college

regarding either your residence status or your spiritual growth (only for the post-semester interview)?